PHILOSOPHICAL AND CRITICAL

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

NATURE, CHARACTERS,

AND

VARIOUS SPECIES

OF

COMPOSITION.

By JOHN OGILVIE, D.D.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

Library of Congress 1884 City of Washington

Η ωως αν αλλως συιςη τοδε ΤΟ ΠΑΝ, ει μη ΡΥΘΜΩ τιν και ΤΑΞΕΙ διικικοσμητο. Και τα υφ' ημων κατασκιναζομινα οργανα ΜΕΤΡΩ ΠΑΝΤΑ γιγνονται. Ει δι ΠΑΝΤΑ αλλα, πολλω γε μαλλον Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ, ατι και ΠΕΡΙΕΚΤΙΚΟΣ ΑΠΑΝΤΩΝ ΩΝ.

ΛΟΝΓΙΝ. ΑΠΟΣΠΑΣ.

Of all the arts in which mankind excel,
Nature's chief master-piece is WRITING WELL.

BUCKINGHAM.

LONDON,
Printed for G. ROBINSON, in Paternoster-Row.
MDCCLXXIV.

PE1402
.06

CONTENTS.

BOOK II.

Of Compoſition as diſtinguiſhed by particular Characters and Species.

SECTION I.

Of the ſtyle of Compoſition in general, its diſtinguiſhing properties and defects. p. 1

SECTION II.

Of ſimple Compoſition. 37

SECTION III.

Of perſpicuous Compoſition. 83

SECTION IV.

Of elegant Compoſition. 122

SECTION V.

Of ſublime Compoſition. 158

SECTION VI.

Of nervous Compoſition. 199

SECTION VII.

Of correct Compoſition. 275

ERRATA.

Page 24. last line of the note, *after* Vid. *add* Liv. Hist. passim. P. 26. l. 3. *after* fable *add* when. P. 36. last line, *add* up to be perused as a task. P. 113. l. 22. *dele* mad. P. 130. l. 2. *for* thrusts *read* throws. P. 167. l. 9. *for* criteria *read* criterion. P. 171. l. 21. *after* when *add* an. P. 186. l. 11. *for* particularly *read* particularity. P. 202. l. 11. *for* is *read* are. P. 223. l. 22. *for* illustrations *read* illustration. P. 238. l. 12. *for* separately *read* seldom. P. 246. l. 6. of the note, *for* allows *read* allowed. P. 262. l. 19. *for* cases *read* causes. P. 280. l. 5. *for* criteria *read* character. P. 286. l. 1. *for* tells *read* tell. P. 331. l. 7. *for* abjurations *read* adjurations.

PHILOSOPHICAL AND CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS ON COMPOSITION.

BOOK II.

Of Compoſition as diſtinguiſhed by particular Characters and Species.

SECTION I.

Of the ſtyle of Compoſition in general, its diſtinguiſhing properties and defects.

FROM the obſervations we have made in a former part of this work on Compoſition, as indicating the intellectual character, and as giving exerciſe to the powers by which man is diſtinguiſhed in all their variety of combination; from theſe we are naturally led to conſider the external marks or ſignatures by which we

eſtimate in the various branches of the art (at leaſt in a great meaſure) the excellence or defect of the artiſt's execution. This preſents to us a view of this ſubject more pleaſing perhaps than we have hitherto taken; and ſuggeſts at the ſame time the anſwer to an important enquiry;—by what method we may diſtinguiſh *genuine* from *apparent* beauty in the performances that fall under our examination; that faults by being perceived may be avoided; and genuine, not ſeeming excellence, may become the object of imitation.

It ought to be obſerved in the preſent, as in many other inſtances, that the difficulty of making this diſtinction is encreaſed more perhaps by a habit of truſting to the judgment of thoſe whom we have been accuſtomed to hold in eſtimation, than from any inability in a great number of readers to think juſtly for themſelves on this ſubject. It happens frequently that thoſe who are diffident of their own ſentiments are miſled in their judgment of things by confiding implicitly in the deciſion of others, who, with inferior merit

perhaps

perhaps to themſelves, have pretenſions incomparably greater; and impoſed upon by an illuſion which reaſon would have diſſipated, permit their opinions to be influenced by falſe prepoſſeſſions, in matters of indiſpenſable importance.

Among the almoſt innumerable expedients by which the judgment of mankind may be marked from its native bias, to form falſe as well as inadequate eſtimates, one of the moſt powerful is that prepoſſeſſion which the mind naturally and juſtly entertains in favour of a work diſtinguiſhed by judicious ſentiments, in whatever dreſs theſe may be exhibited to obſervation. In ſuch caſes the attainment of an end of primary conſequence makes us overlook a circumſtance that is deemed to be comparatively inſignificant; and even a reader, whoſe good ſenſe might (if unbiaſſed in its deciſion) ſhow him the proper value of both objects, is taught to under-rate the one, becauſe perhaps he very properly thinks that too high an eſtimation cannot be formed of the other.

This remark (we may obſerve by the bye) is one of thoſe which diſcover the imperfection of the human mind in a very ſtriking point of view, and it extends as much to the various tranſactions of life, as to matters that may be deemed of pure ſpeculation. Thus a beautiful and a deformed figure, preſented at the ſame time before the eye, will impreſs ideas upon the ſoundeſt underſtanding, which an examination of each of theſe ſeparately will enable it afterwards to correct. The faults of the former will be found to have eſcaped obſervation only as obliterated by the more glaring deformities of the latter; as on the contrary, beauties will be found in this laſt when contemplated apart, which the luſtre of its companion has ſcreened effectually from ſuperficial inveſtigation. Reflection will convince us that we form eſtimates equally inadequate almoſt always when objects of contrary natures are ſet in immediate oppoſition. The advantages ariſing from any acquiſition are never ſeen in ſo ſtriking a light, as when contraſted with

with the loſs or the want of this benefit. We are ready in ſuch a caſe to include every enjoyment in the poſſeſſion of the one, and every miſery in the approach of the other; contrary to that dictate of ſober reaſon which would ſoon convince us that the loſs of ſome acquirements is as neceſſary at one time to prevent ſatiety, as the poſſeſſion of theſe at another is to conſtitute happineſs.—But let us return from this little digreſſion.

To obſtructions ariſing from the motives here enumerated, we may moſt probably aſcribe the little improvement which the ſtile of philoſophical Compoſition received for ſome ages after the fall of the Roman Empire. Thoſe who profeſſed philoſophy in theſe ages collected the maxims without imbibing the ſpirit of the ancients; and having obtained the reputation of thinking judiciouſly in conſequence of a few metaphyſical diſtinctions, the obſcurity of an embarraſſed and inelegant diction, like the hieroglyphical learning of Ægypt, was deemed a proper veil to ſcreen their tenets

from the cogniſance of the vulgar *. Their readers, impoſed upon by the pretenſions of their teachers to ſuperior knowledge and underſtanding, received their inſtructions as oracles emitted by wiſdom; which, conveyed in any form of words whatever, were either admitted as truths irrefragably certain; or admired, when not underſtood, as indications of profound ſagacity. In this manner the jargon of the ſchools not only paſſed upon the leſs intelligent for ſound philoſophy, but even the errors of certain writers came to be held in veneration; and obſcurity of expreſſion, the capital fault of the ſtyle of Compoſition, to be regarded as the myſterious vehicle of truths derived from the deepeſt diſquiſition †.

While

* Among theſe the diſciples of a philoſopher were bound to take an oath. Εν υποκρυφοις ταυτα εχειν, και τοις απαιδευτοις και αμυητοις μη μεταδιδοναι.

Seld. de Diis Syr.

† The bad conſequences that aroſe from the abſurd, trifling, and ſcandalous doctrines of the ſchoolmen in the 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries, are now ſo well known that it would be improper here to trace

While it fared thus with the nobleſt of ſciences, the arts, whoſe improvement contributes

---

trace theſe at any length. We ſhall therefore only obſerve, as a remark connected with the preſent ſubject, that the barbarous language in which theſe were cloathed contributed as much as any other circumſtance to prevent genuine philoſophy from being at the ſame time ſooner and more univerſally propagated. Inſtead of claſſical purity and elegance, Hales, Aquinas, Bonaventure, Achillini, Albertus Magnus, and many others of the ſame claſs, ſtudied only a language ſuited to their own barbarous and unintelligible diſtinctions. One of theſe in particular (Achillini) carried to ſo great a length this talent of perplexing every ſubject by diſtinctions, that his acuteneſs was compared to that of the devil. "Fu acutiſſimo argumentatore (ſays an Italian hiſtorian, of the writers of Bologna) onde ne circoli dove argumentava e non era conoſciuto, paſsò in proverbio qu'ell aut Diabolus, aut Achillinus." Orlan. Notiz. degli Scritt. Bologn. Perhaps one reaſon which contributed principally to keep mankind for ſo many ages in ignorance of every thing but this jargon, which reaſon has now ſo totally exploded, was the ſtate of modern languages then in their infancy, and unfit (from the multifarious dialects then blended together, but having formed no permanent ſtandard) to convey the principles of any art or ſcience whatever. Metaphyſical ſubtleties, therefore, ſcreened from cenſure by the ſacred name of *Ariſtotelian philoſophy*, were cloathed in a language refined by the efforts of a Tully and a Virgil; but theſe having been exploded by the Quodlibetarians, Sententiarians,

tributes to that of philoſophy, with which theſe maintain a conſtant and indiſſoluble union,

---

Nominals, and Scotiſts*, (theſe *Vandals* of *ſcience* who made havock of the *Roman learning* as much as their predeceſſors had done of its *empire)* the admiration of the vulgar was kept up not only by the apprehended importance of certain tenets, but by the very circumſtance perhaps of their being unintelligible; and as the Roman language was ſtudied only for the ſake of a few hackneyed phraſes, known likewiſe to a very ſmall number, no man had either inclination or ability to expoſe the abſurdity of their ſyſtems. The human mind however muſt have emerged in the courſe of ſo many ages from this ſtate of Gothic ignorance, had not men's eyes been artfully dazzled by the ſplendor of an illuſtrious name, and one of the greateſt benefactors of mankind rendered, by a ſtrange perverſion, the patron of abſurdity and nonſenſe. It muſt, no doubt, be acknowledged, that ſome very abſtruſe diſtinctions in the logic and phyſics of Ariſtotle perhaps originally led the way to thoſe verbal controverſies, and unintelligible ænigmas, which were ſanctioned by his authority. But nothing ſerves to diſcover more clearly the danger ariſing from an indulgence of this metaphyſical ſubtlety than the conſequences of which it became productive. The dreams which every diſtempered zealot conceived with regard to election, free will, predeſtination, &c. were retailed as the

* Of theſe parties ſome took their name from performances of Thomas Aquinas, entitled, Quodlibetical Propoſitions, Commentaries on the Sentences of Ariſtotle, &c. or from his name Thomas, or from that of Duns Scotus, the founder of another tribe.

tenets

union, were equally neglected; and genius, like a tree capable of bearing the richeſt productions, but riſing uncultivated in a wilderneſs, diſplayed extravagant though luxuriant ſhoots, inſtead of that mature and beautiful aſſemblage which is the offſpring of culture, induſtry, and attention *.

During

---

tenets of this great philoſopher *; and the play of words introduced into philoſophy, was ſcreened from cenſure under the name of criteria, in imitation of the ſame model by whoſe aid the boundaries of truth and falſhood may be always diſcriminated. "Di cio ce doveva in gran parte obligazione ad Ariſtotele, il quali ſe non ſi foſſe adoperato in *diſtinguer operatamente i* generi delli ragioni, noi mancavamo *di molti articoli* di Fede." Palavicin. Thus Compoſition in every ſenſe of the word, was obliterated during the reign of theſe profound metaphyſicians; and perſpicuity of expreſſion once loſt, a man's learning and ſagacity came to be eſtimated by aſſertions which could not be refuted by the human underſtanding, becauſe they exceeded its comprehenſion.

* That imagination which is the principal characteriſtic of genius, differs in this important reſpect

* See the works of Thomas Anglus, who wrote in the 14th century. Others diſcovered in the works of Ariſtotle, the myſteries of the trinity and incarnation. At the ſame time theſe men were themſelves ſo ignorant of the language in which Ariſtotle wrote, that one of them in a commentary on his works, miſtaking the word αυλοι for αυλος, a muſical inſtrument, adduced thirteen propoſitions to prove that the ſoul of man is a pipe.

from

During the declenſion of the Roman empire, the arts which had flouriſhed in the time of its maturity, decayed gradually as its

---

from the faculty of underſtanding with regard to the objects about which it is employed, that though the latter may, as we have ſeen, be perverted in its uſe to ſupport trifling or even abſurd propoſitions, and to render falſhood plauſible by ſubtlety of diſtinction; yet the genuine offspring of the former however uncultivated are always beautiful, and though in a ſavage or barbarous age, its range may be contracted within a narrower compaſs, or its procedure marked by excentricity and wildneſs, yet ſtill there is ſomething even in this irregularity which the mind contemplates with delight, and approves by a natural and irreſiſtible impulſe. Of the truth of this obſervation we have a ſtriking evidence preſented to us by the preſent ſubject, as at the very time when philoſophy was reduced by the ſchoolmen to the deſpicable ſituation above-mentioned, poetry cultivated by a great and original genius, produced fruit which every ſucceeding age has beheld with admiration. The learned reader will perceive immediately, that the perſon here referred to is the great Italian poet *Dante*, who flouriſhed about the end of the thirteenth century; and was contemporary with the writers mentioned in the preceding note. Stimulated at the ſame time by the propenſity of his genius, and by the moſt implacable reſentment of his country's ingratitude, he produced a poem in that age of ſuperſtition full of the keeneſt and moſt pointed invective; in which, though deficient in diſpoſition and in

its dominion became contracted, and its inhabitants, inſtead of cultivating theſe, which

in claſſical purity of language *, he laviſhed the beauties of poetry in ſuch a manner on his ſubject, that, even two centuries after his death, Francis I. felt the ſting of that ſatire ſo forcibly which was levelled at one of his predeceſſors †, that unable to bear the ſarcaſm, he commanded it to be ſtruck out from the edition of his works then extant in France.—At a time when the world was ſtill buried in ignorance, the celebrated Petrarch ſucceeded to this original; and with a genius leſs daring and animated, but gentler and more amiable than that of the former, contributed to prevent a taſte for letters from being wholly extirpated, and to carry on the work of reformation. Theſe and ſome other writers formed a kind of barrier againſt the encroachments of the ſchoolmen; and by poliſhing gradually the language of their country, opened a way to that clear and comprehenſive philoſophy which ſucceeded to metaphyſical impoſture. The laſt mentioned poet in particular, wrote many pieces in the language of ancient Rome, which (as he was publicly honoured with the laurel) had their weight in rendering it more univerſally ſtudied. Claſſical elegance in this manner came gradually to be admired and imitated; and thoſe unintelligible quibbles which had been deemed the efforts of profound ſagacity, gave way to reſearches in which human na-

* This deficiency can only be imputed to the age in which he wrote. See Lillius Gerald. Hiſt. Poet.

† Charles of Valois, whoſe predeceſſor Hugh Capet, he ſtigmatizeth as the ſon of a butcher.

ture

which are the offspring of tranquillity and opulence, were employed in repelling the aſſaults of northern barbarians, who, after many attempts, at laſt accompliſhed their deſtruction *. In theſe ages the ſpirit of a

---

ture was developed, and the *heart of man*, not the quodlibetical propoſitions, became the ſubject of philoſophical enquiry. Theſe poets however (and even Arioſto himſelf who lived in an age ſomewhat more enlightened) though we may contemplate them as lights hung out to illuminate ſome places amidſt the general darkneſs that overſpread other regions; yet while they reformed mankind, participated themſelves of the faults aſcribed ſo juſtly to the ages in which they lived. In works of length a judicious reader will obſerve a ſtriking defect of correct diſpoſition univerſally taking place, which is one of the ſureſt marks either of a mind inadequate to its ſubject, or of licentious freedom derived from the manners of an uncultivated and barbarous age. But with all theſe diſadvantages the language in which theſe authors wrote was gradually poliſhed by their efforts; and as ſoon as men were led to examine the ſtandards of Greek and Roman genius, which had fallen ſo long into diſuſe, the faults of Compoſition in theſe days of ignorance were detected and rectified, at the ſame time that a more improved age expelled their models of architecture, ſtatuary, and painting.

* See the deplorable ſtate of the empire at this time deſcribed by Ammianus Marcellinus, and St. Jerom, who prophetically foretell the fall of the Roman world.

nation

nation was depreſſed while its acquiſitions were gradually ſubverted; and attention diverted from the cultivation of the beautiful, into the channel of the neceſſary and more immediately important, was wholly engroſſed by external tranſactions, or by ſuperſtitious terrors ariſing ultimately from diſappointment.

It is a remark which will be found univerſally characteriſtical of mankind, that when the mind is damped and cruſhed as it were, by a ſeries of unexpected and diſpiriting incidents, it is apt to follow the lead of ſuperſtition, and to trace conſequences to cauſes wholly fictitious and imaginary when it cannot develope their real original. In Rome when in all its glory with regard to grandeur and conqueſt, a dictator was formally elected to expel the peſtilence by driving a nail into the wall of a temple *; and one of the greateſt men whom Athens ever produced, was ſacrificed to the cabal of a few factious citizens

* Examples of this need not be adduced. They occur often in the hiſtory of the Commonwealth while in its infancy.

artfully

artfully working on the ſuperſtition of the populace *. Theſe, however, as both nations were ſtill in their maturity, were only ſhort eruptions of a flame which was ſmothered though not extinguiſhed by the ſudden extinction of the cauſes which gave riſe to it. But during the decay of the immenſe empire of Rome as theſe cauſes operated more ſteadily and univerſally, their conſequences are ſet in a very ſtrong light, and lie immediately open to diſpaſſionate enquiry. The minds of men were at this time occupied in every province of the empire by attending either to the ravages of the barbarous nations attacking it on all ſides, or to the more alarming internal diſſenſions which divided the chriſtian church, and gave full ſcope to the ſuggeſtions of ſuperſtition, as the growth of heterodox opinions, and not the general corruption of manners was deemed to be

* The incident here referred to, relates, as the learned reader will perceive, to Alcibiades, who was driven from his country to gratify the moſt abſurd ſuperſtition, and with whom fell the glory and dominion of Athens.

the cauſe of every repeated diſaſter *. Each ſect had here a field to retort the accuſation from one to another; and while men's hearts were heated with rancour and animoſity, or their dread excited by the imminent danger of loſing their poſſeſſions, it is ſurely not to be wondered at, that their ſentiments became perplexed, their learning contracted, and their language inelegant.

In this ſeries of events it is that we are to ſearch for the true cauſe of the decline of the finer arts, and of the darkneſs in which for many ages theſe continued to be inveloped. Hiſtory affords us many

* The author here means only to take notice of thoſe ſchiſms in the Chriſtian church which from their abſurdity and inconſiſtence could not produce bad conſequences of any kind, though the zeal of ſome good men who employed their pens to expoſe principles which would have been forgot in a few years had no notice been taken of them, contributed at the ſame time to ſharpen the ſpirits of men againſt each other, and to render the contagion more univerſal. Thus it happened, that what would have been only contemptible became noxious; and men were raiſed into ſignificance by miſapplication of the means applied to render them the objects of ridicule or deteſtation.

examples

examples of barbarous nations who, after having ſubdued people more improved than themſelves, have in the courſe of a few ages adopted the laws, the manners, and the learning of the conquered. Here however the caſe was altogether different. The ſubdued nations became aſſimilated (at leaſt in a great meaſure) to their barbarous conquerors. Whence ariſeth this ſtriking difference?—From this cauſe undoubtedly, that every object worthy of imitation (with regard to the circumſtances above-mentioned) had been cancelled among the conquered nations before they ſubmitted to a foreign yoke. The wretched remains of their former excellence were ſtill indeed to be met with:—but theſe, inſufficient to improve a people altogether uncultivated, were mixed with abſurd and extravagant hypotheſes; by which means a group of diſſimilar, often diſcordant objects was preſented to the mind, which it required the efforts of mankind not in one but in many ages to expel as the offspring of error, and to ſubſtitute proportion and ſymmetry in its room. Superſtition in

theſe

theſe times, untamed by the dictates of temperate philoſophy, ſuggeſted imaginary evils which paſſed immediately for realities; and theſe dreams inculcated in language ſwelling into fuſtian, chiming into quibble, loaded with ornament, or pointed with unmeaning antitheſis, made an impreſſion upon minds unacquainted with any ſuperior ſtyle of eloquence, adequate in every reſpect to the purpoſes which it was calculated to produce.

There is, it will be obſerved, this invariable affinity betwixt ſentiment and the language in which it is conveyed, that though the diction may be ſmooth and mellifluous when the thoughts are wholly ſuperficial, yet when theſe laſt are juſt and pertinent, forced ornaments and little conceits are ſeldom or never to be met with in the other. Sentiments judiciouſly applied, and diſtinctly comprehended, ſupport themſelves by their own intrinſic worth, and require only to be placed before the mind in ſimple, clear, and appropriated words. The ſame remark may be applied to illuſtrations. Theſe (which

in all works of length are indiſpenſable) may be made to repreſent their objects in a very animated manner, when the words are forcible without being turgid, and the image ſtrong though perfectly natural. When language on the contrary is obviouſly ſtrained, and the words thrown out of their natural arrangement into irregular combinations, there is generally ſome correſponding affectation in the thought which will marr the effect ariſing ultimately from all.

During the continuance of thoſe ages that elapſed from the decline of the Roman empire after the removal of the imperial ſeat, to the revival of letters in the ſixteenth century, the faults that we have thus enumerated as characteriſing the ſtyle of Compoſition, we may affirm to have been principal cauſes, not only of the ignorance and conſequently the rude manners of men, but of the duration of both to ſo diſtant a period.—But in order to comprehend the truth of this aſſertion, it will be neceſſary that we enter more cloſely into the ſubject.

In

In what light ſoever we conſider mankind, very little reflection will ſerve to convince us that the *dreſs* in which objects are preſented to the mind is a circumſtance demanding the greateſt degree of attention. It is in this caſe with the intellectual powers as in common inſtances with the external organ of perception. "As an "object, perhaps naturally uninviting if "not diſagreeable, is rendered attractive "by an happy choice and diſpoſition of "ornament in the laſt inſtance, ſo in the "other, even trite ſentiments and mode-"rate elocution become ſtriking and ani-"mated when theſe are recommended by "the muſic of harmonious expreſſion *." When deprived on the other hand of this recommendation, the moſt judicious thoughts loſe to every reader a great part of their energy, and appear at beſt like Ulyſſes in the rags of a beggar, diſguiſed, ungraceful, and diſqualified to attract that attention which theſe might otherwiſe have

* "Nam quædam & ſententiis parva, & elocutione modica *virtus hæc ſola* commendat." Quintil. lib. ix. c. 4.

irreſiſtibly arreſted. The ſtyle therefore of Compoſition will claim from theſe conſiderations a very high degree of merit, as upon this ſingle circumſtance depends the impreſſion which ſentiments make upon the mind *. It is true indeed, that when in conſequence of a great diſproportion betwixt the intellectual faculties, thoughts altogether ſuperficial are ſpun out and elaborately decorated with ſuperfluous drapery; a judicious reader will ſoon be diſguſted with ſo obvious an incongruity, and the writer will accompliſh no other purpoſe than that of diſcovering the levity of an exuberant imagination uncontrouled by the underſtanding. But even here we may obſerve in a ſtrong light the effect ariſing from muſical dic-

* Ουκ οομεθα δ'αρα την συνθεσιν αρμονιαν τινα ϗσαν λογων ανθρωποις εμφυτων, και της ψυχης αυτης, ϗχι της ακοης μονης εφαπτομενων ϖοικιλας κινϗσαν ιδεας ονοματων, νοησεων, ϖραγματων, καλλϗς ευμελειας, ϖαντων ημιν εντροφων και συγγενων και αμα τη μιξει και ϖολυμορφια των εαυτης φθογγων το ϖαρεχος τω λεγοντι ϖαθος εις τας ψυχας ϖαρεισαγϗσαν. Λονγιν. ϖερι Υψ. τμημ. λθ.

tion,

tion, as the ear is not only filled with the period, but the paſſions themſelves are often powerfully excited when reaſon receives but little information. It is reflection that detects the fallacy, by enabling us to diſtinguiſh the tinſel of puerile fancy from the accurate and coherent inveſtigation of reaſon.

As it is thus obvious that the effect which any diſcourſe produceth depends in a great meaſure upon the propriety of well adapted expreſſion, it will follow that the ultimate ends of Compoſition cannot in any caſe be obtained when this propriety is neglected, and when ſomething unſuitable is perceived to take place betwixt the *things* inculcated in any branch of the art, and the language in which theſe are preſented to the mind. That the civilization of mankind was originally promoted by perſons who excelled in the higheſt ſpecies of this comprehenſive art; that during its maturity, nations the moſt admired flouriſhed in every circumſtance either agreeable or beneficial; that upon its decline the manners of men returned gradually

back to their primitive ruſticity; and that in all ages, without exception, it has been the principal vehicle of light, of knowledge, and of happineſs, as connected with cultivated life;—theſe truths in a following ſection of this work it will be our buſineſs more particularly to enforce and illuſtrate *. At preſent it is only proper to obſerve, that in proportion as we admit all or any of theſe to be derived from this original, the language in which they are exhibited will appear to merit a greater or leſs degree of attention. That any means whatever may accompliſh the purpoſe for which it is applied, we conſider it always as expedient that this ſhould not only be thoroughly comprehended, but that it ſhould likewiſe be rendered agreeable. Neceſſity indeed ſometimes obliges us to turn our thoughts upon ſchemes of utility, in the purſuit of which we enjoy only the ſatisfaction of contemplating the end as making gradually its approach. But it will conſiſt with every man's experience, that truths the moſt important

* Book iv. ſect. 1.

when

when conveyed in dry language, and far more when wrapt in obſcurity, are commonly ſtudied and underſtood by few from whoſe memory likewiſe theſe may eaſily be eraſed; and no purpoſe of general emolument can be effectuated while the path that leads to it is intricate and unfrequented.

In order therefore to extend the obſervation, to cultivate the minds, and to poliſh the manners of mankind, their firſt teachers conſidered it as principally requiſite to clothe their inſtructions in the moſt captivating dreſs. Hence fable and allegory became the vehicles of moral ſentiment in the firſt dawning of ſociety *; and as this method of communicating it was conformable to nature, whoſe ſtandard is unalterable, it continued to be purſued ſucceſsfully when civilization had made much greater progreſs †. In many caſes

* In the writings of Orpheus, Amphion, Linus, &c. not to mention the two perfect ſtandards of the epopœa, the Iliad, and Odyſſey.

† Such are the beautiful pictures of Prodicus and Cebes in particular, beſides the many ſublime allegories in the philoſophy of Plato,

as that of the legiſlator in particular) when this medium of knowledge could not be made uſe of, precepts, rules of conduct, and even treaties of war and peace betwixt nations, were expreſſed with the utmoſt perſpicuity and brevity, that thoſe truths might be rendered univerſally intelligible whoſe immediate end is the benefit of ſociety, and in the expreſſion of which exterior ornament would be wholly improper *. By theſe means the maſters of Compoſition alternately edified and entertained mankind. The manners of men became inſenſibly ſoftened, and the love of virtue was inſtilled into the heart while their attention was arreſted by harmonious expreſſion, or their judgment convinced

* The reader who would ſee this truth evinced may have recourſe to many parts of the Greek or Roman hiſtory, in both of which he will find the treaties made with different nations, particularly with the Greeks and Perſians, and betwixt the Romans and Carthaginians in the Punic wars, conceived in ſuch ſimple terms, and ſo conciſely expreſſed as will ſhow that perſpicuity beyond all other circumſtances was ſtudied by both nations in the relation of their mutual agreements; and that theſe may be exhibited as models of ancient accuracy and propriety. Vid.

by

by ſentiments clearly as well as juſtly laid before them; thoſe principles by whoſe aid the human mind is moſt powerfully impreſſed, were judiciouſly applied to for this purpoſe; and that deſign was accompliſhed to which means were ſo happily adapted in conſequence of that knowledge which the firſt philoſophers diſcovered of the nature of man.

In the whole proceſs here carried on, it will be eaſy to diſcern the uſe, or rather the neceſſity there was for adorning ſcience, when thus eminently uſeful, with the inſinuating eloquence of modulating language *. Precepts of any kind are undoubtedly of advantage only as theſe are univerſally examined and underſtood. In order to be rendered thus extenſively beneficial, it is requiſite that theſe ſhould be rendered intelligible to all, and ſo enter-

* "Et tamen omnium longitudinum & brevitatum in ſonis ſicut acutarum graviumque vocum (ſays the illuſtrious Roman orator) judicium ipſa natura in auribus noſtris collocavit; aures enim vel animus aurium nuncio naturalem quandam in ſe continet vocum omnium menſionem, &c. See likewiſe Διονυσ. Αλικαρνασ. περι Ξυνθεσ. Ονοματ. p. 30.

taining

taining at the ſame time by being inculcated as the morals of ſome beautiful fable, this vehicle can be employed as to evince that their authors well underſtood this important truth, that he alone poſſeſſeth true diſcernment—" Qui miſcuit utile dulci,—who blends the agreeable with the inſtructive."

Here it may perhaps be objected to our remarks on Compoſition in general, and particularly to the importance of attending to expreſſion, that in whatever language we clothe our ſentiments theſe cannot be of ſuch extenſive emolument as has been repreſented, becauſe the far greater number of mankind have in all ages ſhown little taſte for the arts, and have neither inclination to ſtudy, nor capacity to be improved by the beauties, however exquiſite, which are here pointed out. But we may reply to this, that in order to be benefited by the art of which we treat, it was not neceſſary that every man ſhould have judged from perſonal experience of its utility, any more than it is that to be convinced that there are ſuch cities as Paris

and

and Rome, we muſt receive occular evidence by ſurveying theſe on the ſpot. Of the laſt we receive ſufficient proof from teſtimony wholly unqueſtioned, and the firſt becomes ſubſervient to all the ends we have mentioned, by refining the ſentiments and manners even of a few whoſe natural abilities thus improved qualify them to render theſe advantages at laſt univerſal by their influence, example, and converſation. Philoſophy, conſidered with regard to effects on practice, is often ſufficiently underſtood by men who have never entered deeply into metaphyſical ſpeculation, in the ſame manner as the performance of an able muſician will communicate the moſt delightful ſenſations to a man who neither underſtands the rules of muſic himſelf, nor is able properly to employ an inſtrument. In both caſes it is only indiſpenſably requiſite that there ſhould be maſters excellent in their profeſſions, and qualified from this excellence to bring emolument, or procure an high degree of pleaſure to thoſe with whom they are connected in ſociety.

ſociety. It will not be affirmed by any man that the Athenian people, though acknowledged to have been the moſt ingenious and poliſhed of any upon earth *, were all of them orators of the firſt claſs, or were fitted to excel in any other ſpecies of Compoſition. A diſtinguiſhed genius in philoſophy, poetry, or eloquence, made his appearance among them at ſome times; and by exciting the curioſity, or intereſting powerfully the paſſions of human nature in his cauſe, became a benefactor to mankind in general, though the perſons more immediately benefited were diſqualified to comprehend every part of his writings, and far more to imitate his example. In ſome ages, maſters in almoſt all the departments of literature aroſe at once, like new conſtellations illuminating the horizon, and ſpread light all around them as they

---

*. Cicero's panegyric on this people ſhows what they continued to be even in his time. "Eruditiſſimos homines Aſiaticos *quivis* Athenienſis indoctus, non verbis, ſed ſono vocis, nec tam bene, quam ſuaviter loquendo facile ſuperabit." De Orat. lib. iii.

pro-

proceeded in their courſe *. By theſe means, however, the people of Athens became ſuch judges of language, and ſo accuſtomed to the moſt delicate propriety of expreſſion, that an old woman of this city is ſaid to have known the celebrated Theophraſtus to be a foreigner, notwithſtanding a reſidence of many years at Athens, by the wrong pronunciation of a ſingle word.

As ſtates therefore and kingdoms were gradually civilized, as men of genius and letters brought Compoſition nearer to a

---

* The age of Pericles affords an example of the firſt mentioned improvement, as that great man carried eloquence to a pitch never before known in Athens, and may be ſaid to have afforded a model not only to the orators of his own age, but to his ſucceſſor Demoſthenes, who carried the art to perfection. This was completed in the age of Socrates (as it may well be called) when that illuſtrious name, with thoſe of Ariſtotle and Plato, dignified philoſophy; in hiſtory appeared a Thucydides and Xenophon; in poetry an Æſchylus, Euripides, Ariſtophanes, Sophocles, Menander; in eloquence Demoſthenes ſhone with unrivalled luſtre; while Apelles, Phidias, and Praxiteles, completed this illuſtrious catalogue by their diſtinguiſhed eminence in painting.

ſtate of perfection*; ſo as the art degenerated from this ſtandard we ſhall find a cor-

* It is neceſſary here that we keep conſtantly in our eye one diſtinction betwixt the effects which the poſſeſſion of immenſe wealth produceth uſually upon the manners of a people, and thoſe which attend the progreſs of literary purſuits. Experience hath evinced in all ages, that the moſt hardy nations are in the courſe of a few generations effeminated by opulence, and that every refinement of luxury will in time be ſubſtituted in place of frugal meals, athletic exerciſes, vulgar attire, and mean accommodations. The ancient Perſians appear to have had all the advantages derived from this ſource in the greateſt profuſion, and the arts attendant on luxury ſeem likewiſe to have been in ſome meaſure cultivated. Science however, and art in its utmoſt perfection excludes effeminacy as much as ruſticity from the manners of mankind, and preſerving the medium betwixt theſe extremes, confers courage while it ſubdues ferocity, and gives an elegance of manners perfectly conſiſtent with vigour and intrepidity. The Greeks, inſpired by their philoſophers and orators with the contempt of death, and with the love of their country, conſidered the *great king* with juſtice as a ſplendid barbarian, and ſurpaſſed his ſubjects as much in the atchievements of war as in the cultivation of the finer arts, by whoſe influence a nation is benefited and adorned. The Turks in the preſent age, and the Aſiatic people in general, compared with theſe of Europe, exhibit an inſtance in all reſpects ſimilar to the former. Enervated by luxury without having ſeized the means of preventing its conſequences,

correſponding change wrought on the manners of men which at the ſame time indiſpenſably loſt their principal excellencies. Deprived of thoſe ſchools in which the practice of virtue was powerfully recommended, while taſte acquired elegance and exquiſite ſenſibility, men relapſed into barbarity as they fell into ignorance; and that ſavage ferocity (dignified with the name of courage) and abſurd oſtentation (miſtaken for grandeur) again characterized nations which the light of knowledge had enabled theſe to diſtinguiſh *. It is true, indeed, that the ſciences

---

conſequences, the inhabitants of the ſouthern provinces are found by experience to want that ſpirit of enterprize which the deſire of knowledge powerfully ſtimulates, and that unſhaken fortitude in danger which ariſeth from contemplating death as a ſecondary evil. On the other hand, we have lately ſeen a people in the northern regions of this continent barbarous in their manners, and expoſed to the rigour of an inhoſpitable climate, poliſhed gradually by the introduction of thoſe arts which the others have neglected, and excelling in the qualities which we have now ſhown to be their inſeparable attendants.

* In their jouſts and tournaments particularly; in the ſums that were laviſhed without taſte when their princes

ences in appearance continued to be taught, and the arts were known perhaps by more than appellation: but both became at laſt only "magni nominis umbra." With regard to the former, had the purity of philoſophical *ſentiment* even remained in theſe ages of darkneſs, it could have produced no effect on manners when that of language had degenerated. But this ſuppoſition is not natural. Juſtneſs of ſentiment, and an happy perſpicuity of expreſſion, had the ſame period. As men were improved by philoſophy when rendered univerſally intelligible by ſimplicity of language, and attractive by appropriated decoration, ſo when theſe means of improvement ceaſed to exiſt, their effects were likewiſe at an end. In proportion too as the evil ſpread, no remedy having been applied in due time, the cure became ſtill a matter of more difficulty. It is in all caſes whatever much eaſier to deviate from the right path, than to recover it

---

princes met with each other, and in the numerous and barbarous retinues with which theſe affected always to be ſurrounded.

when

when we have wandered and fallen into a labyrinth.

——— Facilis deſcenſus Averni :—
Sed revocare gradum, ſuperaſque evadere ad auras,
Hoc opus, hic labor eſt.——— VIRG.

When a few however began at laſt to obſerve the falſe lights by which they had been miſled, and to follow the true ones; beſides the almoſt inſuperable difficulty of forming a juſt ſtandard themſelves, when error had every where become ſo prevalent;—the prejudices of men attached to certain modes, however irrational, were to be ſubdued; and that fatal obſtacle to all improvement among thoſe whoſe opinions are taken up at ſecond hand, a great name on their ſide of the queſtion, to be removed by a clear appeal to the deciſion of reaſon.

We have entered into this detail particularly on the preſent occaſion, as it enables us to aſſign its due value to an important branch of our ſubject, and may be of uſe to thoſe who having fixed their attention (where it no doubt ought principally to be fixed) on the arrangement and ſentiment of their work, have failed

after all to render it of general utility by neglecting to cultivate the elegant and agreeable *. Theſe men are chargeable with

* The ancient critics agree univerſally in their ſentiments of the high value of the ſtyle of Compoſition, and their other writers conform exactly (as we ſhall ſee afterwards) to the rules which theſe lay down. Ariſtotle tells us, that a writer in proſe ought only to uſe a looſer and leſs ornamented rythmus than the poet, ſo that his ſtyle will be a kind of *carmen ſolutum*, as Quintilian calls it. PHTOP. βιϐ. Γ. τμημ. γ. & η. Longinus ſtrongly expreſſeth his judgment on this ſubject, by ſaying φως γαρ τω οντι ιδιον του νου τα καλα ονοματα. Περι Υψ. τμημ. μ. Dionyſius Halicarnaſſeus confirms likewiſe the preceding theory when he juſtly obſerves, Πολλοι γουν Ποιηται, και Συγγραφεις, Φιλοσοφοι, και Ρητορες λεξεις ϖανυ καλας και ϖρεπϖσας τοις υποκειμενοις εκλεξαντες επιμελως αρμονιαν δε αυταις ϖεριθεντες εικαιαν τινα και αμϖσον ϖδην χρησον απελαυσεν εκεινϖ τϖ ϖονϖ. Ετεροι δε, ευκαταφρονητα και ταπεινα λαϐοντες ονοματα, συνθεντες δε αυτα ηδεως και ϖεριττως ϖ᾽λην της αφροδιτην τω λογω ϖεριεθηκαν. Περι ΣΥΝΘΕΣ. ONOM. p. ii. edit. Lipſ. The Roman orator adopts the very words of Ariſtotle in his Diſcourſe on Eloquence. "Perſpicuum eſt igitur numeris adſtrictam orationem eſſe debere; carere verſibus." De Orat. ſect. 56. Again, he calls the ſtyle of Compoſition in the ſame treatiſe "optimus & præſtantiſſimus dicendi effector & Magiſter." It would be as endleſs to enumerate the opinions

with a fault of the ſame kind with that of a man, who, though poſſeſſed of the higheſt intellectual merit would juſtly meet with neglect, if not with ridicule, by pretending to frequent the beſt company in an unfaſhionable, ſlovenly, or antiquated dreſs *.

As

---

opinions of the ancients with regard to the excellence and uſe of words juſtly ranged and properly ſelected, as to mention the diverſified rules which they have laid down for the attainment of this purpoſe. From thoſe which we have taken notice of here, it ought not to be concluded that theſe great men either compoſed themſelves in what may be termed a poetical ſtyle, or recommend this to others who write in proſe upon any ſubject. The ancients indeed, infuſed in general into their writings a much larger portion of the idioms of poetry (as we ſhall ſee afterwards) than would now be thought conſiſtent with purity of expreſſion. But they mean to preſcribe only an attention to harmony, as univerſally neceſſary, which they appear to have conſidered themſelves as an uniſon to the human heart. Images likewiſe the moſt pictureſque, they permit us to uſe in any ſpecies of Compoſition whatever, as tending to render a ſentiment clear that might have been perplexed, and an addreſs animated which would have been overlooked. The two provinces however they require to be preſerved wholly diſtinct.

* No reader will here ſo far miſtake the author's meaning as to ſuppoſe that he intends to repreſent

As we have thus endeavoured by obſervations drawn from human nature, and confirmed by the evidence of hiſtory, to ſhow the important ends which may be accompliſhed by cultivating the ſtyle of Compoſition, it is neceſſary, in order to complete our view of this ſubject, that we conſider next what is the beſt method to obtain excellence in a point of ſuch utility, by examining ſeparately the various *characters* by which different themes require expreſſion to be diſtinguiſhed, and by pointing out *that fault* into which we may fall while purſuing too eagerly the oppoſite beauty. The principal characters of

---

ſtyle as the dreſs of ſentiment, as equal with regard to its effects with thoſe that accompany elegance or ſordid negligence, in the attire of the body. The illuſtration drawn from this laſt is indeed juſt, in as much as meanneſs in either will expoſe a man to neglect; and the faults are therefore of *the ſame kind*; but there is this ſtriking difference betwixt theſe, that though intellectual merit may render a man in the laſt inſtance univerſally agreeable as a companion, when his peculiarity in point of dreſs is overlooked, yet in the other caſe, a work however valuable, in conſequence of its defect in language is known only to a few, and among theſe is only taken.

the

the ſtyle of Compoſition, according to that branch of the art which may be ſtudied, are ſimplicity, perſpicuity, elegance, ſtrength, grandeur or ſublimity, propriety. The faults oppoſed or allied to theſe are meanneſs, obſcurity, affected prettineſs, weakneſs, bombaſt, inaccuracy. To each of the former therefore we ſhall appropriate a ſeparate ſection. The latter will naturally fall under our conſideration as ſtanding in relation, or in oppoſition to the firſt. In order to render this part of the work as complete as poſſible, we ſhall in the laſt place conſider what may be termed omiſſions or defects, rather than blemiſhes in this matter, that theſe by being expoſed may be avoided or rectified.

SECTION II.

Of Simple Compoſition.

SIMPLICITY of expreſſion is a phraſe often uſed by men who have not affixed to it any determinate meaning. The greateſt number of men who are in-

fluenced in this matter by the judgment of others, either give their opinion at ſecond hand, or think that the ſimpleſt ſtyle conſiſts of plain words put together without ſtrength, variety, or ornament; an advantage which will be poſſeſſed in a greater or leſs degree, in proportion to a man's deficiency of genius. A very ſmall ſhare of reflection is however ſufficient to convince us that an opinion of this kind muſt be wholly irrational, as it would deprive Compoſition of that juſt variety of language with which ſubjects altogether different ought neceſſarily to be treated. The ſame juſt diſcernment which makes a man ſelect ſuch exterior decoration as is at the ſame time ſuited to his circumſtances, and advantageous to his appearance, will enable him to pronounce, if equally unbiaſſed, that nothing can be truly beautiful in Compoſition which wants that decent ornament that in all caſes is neceſſary to conſtitute excellence. A theme of importance, in order to be properly managed, demands a dignity of expreſſion correſponding to the nature of the ſentiments;

and

and vulgar epithets ought here to be avoided with the utmoſt care, as tending to depreſs theſe beneath their proper level *. When ſtriking images, or illuſtrations of any kind ought neceſſarily to be introduced, ſimplicity is only violated by the uſe of phraſes wholly unappropriated:—but theſe, however diverſified, while neither meanly creeping, nor affectedly pompous, are juſt ſuch as genius may perhaps have dictated to the author; and the good ſenſe of his reader will im-

---

* "Et quod facit ſyllabarum (ſays Quintilian) idem verborum quoque inter ſe copulatio, ut aliud alii junctum melius ſonet.—Rebus atrocibus verba etiam ipſo auditu aſpera magis conveniunt. Et honeſta quidem turpibus potiora ſemper; nec ſordidis unquam in oratione erudita eſt locus. Quod enim alibi magnificum, tumidum alibi. Et quæ humilia circa res magnas, apta circa minores videntur." Lib. viii. c. 3. In the ſame ſpirit a critic, formerly quoted, obſerves, Φημι δε τον βουλομενον εργασασθαι λεξιν καλην εν τω συντιθεναι τας φωνας οσα καλλιλογιαν και μεγαλοπρεπειαν η σεμνοτητα περιειληφεν ονοματα εις ταυτο συναγειν· Ειρηται δε τινα περι τουτων Θεοφραστω τω φιλοσοφω κοινοτερον εν τω περι λεξεως, &c. ΔΙΟΝΥΣ. ΑΛΙΚΑΡ. Περι ΣΥΝΘΕΣ. ΟΝΟΜ. p. 15.

mediately approve. What one of the moſt ſenſible writers of antiquity ſays of *things*, may ſurely be applied here with propriety to words.

Eſt *modus* in *lingua*; ſunt certæ denique fines,
Quas ultra citraque nequit conſiſtere rectum. HOR.

1. The ſimple therefore in Compoſition may be conſidered as ſtanding in a double relation to *words*, and to thoſe *images* with which language is ornamented. The ſtyle of a performance is *ſimple* when expreſſions are happily choſen, properly placed, and ſo well adapted to the nature of the ſubject that the mind perceives in them neither abundance nor defect. By the former the *force* of a ſentiment is deſtroyed; by the latter its grace and its perſpicuity. That taſte for variety which is natural to the human mind, operates with equal power on every ſubject that attracts its attention. A thought ſtrikingly characteriſtical of the heart or mind, and calculated on that account to make a very forcible impreſſion on an intelligent reader, when it is ſpun out and placed elaborately

in

in every point of view, fatigues inſtead of affording us either inſtruction or entertainment:—its force is gradually enervated, and at laſt it eſcapes obſervation. This fault is often imputable to authors of unqueſtioned genius, and generally to thoſe who have received a large proportion of imagination. In eloquence particularly, an orator is apt in this manner to violate ſimplicity by attempting to enlarge and amplify every part of his ſubject.—"As (ſays the eloquent Chryſoſtom) "we admire a phyſician when we obſerve "him reſtoring to perfect health perſons "who had laboured under diſeaſes that "were judged to be incurable; ſo, my "beloved friends, behold with admiration "and aſtoniſhment the actions of our Sa-"viour, who could not only expel at once "diſeaſes, however inveterate, from the "body, but could render thoſe *in a moment* "worthy of the kingdom of heaven who "had attained to the very ſummit of "wickedneſs.—To-day (ſaid he to the "thief on the croſs) thou ſhalt be with

"me

" me in paradiſe *." Without remarking here on the illuſtration, as not perfectly adequate to its object, I ſhall only obſerve, that the ſenſe at theſe laſt words is complete, and the words of ſcripture are ſignificant and ſtriking. But when our celebrated orator lengthens out this deſcription by talking of the μεγαλη τιμη, πολυ της φιλανθρωπιας το μεγεθος, αφατος η υπερβολη της αγαθοτητος, great dignity, immenſe philanthropy, and inexpreſſible overflowing of love diſcovered in this tranſaction, every reader will be ready to think that an animated ſtroke of eloquence is here enervated by an amplification inconſiſtent with ſimplicity.

As this character of the ſtyle of Compoſition appears thus to be incompatible

* Καθαπερ οἱουν ἰατρον τοτε θαυμαζομεν οταν ἰδωμεν οτι ανθρωπους ανιατα νοσηματα εχοντας απαλλαξας της ἀῤῥωστιας προς καθαραν υγιειαν επανηγαγεν· ουτω και τον ΧΡΙΣΤΟΝ θαυμασον αγαπητε και εκπλαγηθι οτι λαβων ανιατα νοσηματα ψυχης εχοντας ανθρωπους ἰσχυσε και της κακιας απαλλαξαι, και της των ουρανων βασιλειας ἀξιους αποφηναι τους προς την εσχατην πονηριαν εληλακοτας. Σημερον μετ' εμου εση εν τω Παραδεισω. ΧΡΥΣΟΣΤ. εις το σαυρ. p. 488.

with

with improper diffuſion, ſo it is in other caſes equally violated by the affectation of brevity. The mind, like the body, is equally debilitated by too much, and by too little exerciſe. It perceives immediately a defect of expreſſion when the parts of a ſubject are not ſhown in their full proportions, and when thoughts are crouded ſo cloſely together that it requires the force of conſtant recollection to contemplate theſe apart. A noble and ſtriking ſentiment is often overlooked by an error of this kind, juſt as a ſingle figure though intenſely animated may eſcape the eye in a piece of hiſtory-painting, by being improperly placed in a promiſcuous group. An object delineated with ſimplicity is one in which all is uniform, regular, and conſiſtent. When theſe ſucceed one another with too much rapidity, regularity can no longer be attended to in their diſpoſition; and inſtead of being preſented to the mind in a *ſuitable* dreſs, ſuch objects cannot be ſaid with propriety to have any form whatever.

Should

Should it be ſaid after all, that the affectation of conciſeneſs which is cenſured here, is rather in general deſtructive of *perſpicuity*, than inconſiſtent with *ſimplicity* of language, we may anſwer, that if the latter can only be obtained when an idea is expreſſed in the fitteſt words, and is exhibited in a dreſs at the ſame time unoſtentatious and attractive, it will follow that when language wants theſe diſtinguiſhing qualities it can with no more propriety be denominated ſimple, than this epithet would characteriſe the appearance of a man whoſe clothes were diſproportioned to the ſhape or ſize of his body; and deſtitute of that beautiful ſymmetry which gives eaſe as well as dignity to the deportment.

Among the ancients there is perhaps no writer who more frequently loſeth ſight of ſimplicity by this affectation of peculiar brevity, than the ſatyriſt Perſius. Perhaps indeed of all the other branches of Compoſition, ſatire is that in which it is moſt neceſſary to render a ſtroke energetical by a mode of expreſſion at the ſame time

conciſe

conciſe and forcible. But the poet above-mentioned will ſurely be deemed by every intelligent reader to have erred in attempting to imitate this beauty. The very firſt lines of his poem preſent to us ſentiments that appear disjointed, becauſe the language is defective in which theſe are repreſented.

O curas hominum! O quantum eſt in rebus inane!—

Quis leget hæc?—Min' tu iſtud ais?—Nemo hercule Nemo.

Vel duo, vel nemo.—Turpe, & miſerabile. Quare? Ne mihi Polydamus, & Troiades Labeonem Pretulerint.—Nugæ, &c.

In theſe verſes the thoughts obviouſly ſeem to want connection, from too ſcanty a proportion of words. After having mentioned the vanity of human enjoyments, we are not aware that the expreſſion "Quis leget hæc?" which is abrupt enough in the beginning of the ſecond line of his ſatire, is deſigned to ſtrike at the manners of the Romans, then ſo degenerated as to read nothing that bore the ſemblance of morality. Again, in the

lines

lines immediately following, the ſenſe requires him to have ſaid—" As Hector was " afraid leſt the Trojans ſhould prefer " Polydamus to him, ſo am I alarmed leſt " our Polydamus (Nero) ſhould prefer " Labeo to me."—But by leaving out the word (vereor) " I am afraid" the ſenſe is left uncompleted.—We might mention examples of the ſame fault in more modern writers than Perſius *. But what has been already ſaid we preſume is ſufficient to illuſtrate our view of this ſubject, and to dwell on the faults of an eminent author longer than ſuch an illuſtration may require, is altogether diſagreeable.

Let us obſerve, however, that the ſtyle of Compoſition, conſidered as a vehicle of thought which ought to be juſtly adapted to its object, is in the above-mentioned inſtance principally defective in that ſimple deſcription which demands the whole to be plainly and conſiſtently repreſented.

* In the Satires and Night Thoughts of Young, the reader will meet with inſtances of the fault here cenſured, ariſing moſt probably from that *rapidity of thought* (if we may thus expreſs it) which often characteriſeth the higheſt degree of genius.

When

When the language of any work is on the other hand judiciouſly adapted to the ſentiments, the peruſal of it affords the mind that perfect ſatisfaction which (though unknown to ourſelves) is really the conſequence of having obtained an accurate imitation of nature. In philoſophy and hiſtory, as well as in ſuch works as are more immediately addreſſed to the imagination, this correſpondence of expreſſion and thought hath the ſame uniform and unvaried effect. Every man is ready to think, that placed in ſimilar circumſtances he would have thought or ſpoke in the ſame manner as the author, becauſe in fact he hath adopted the language not of an individual, but of human nature.

There is no miſtake more common, and at the ſame time ſuſceptible of eaſier refutation, than that which would confine ſimplicity to ſome particular ſpecies of Compoſition, when in reality it conſtitutes the principal ornament of all. Though paſtoral poetry, obvious narration, or deſcriptions of ſtill life are the uſual ſpheres of this excellence, in which it ought invariably

riably to predominate, yet we ſhall find upon trial the ſublime, the pictureſque, the nervous, and the pathetic, to be diſtinguiſhed when in their higheſt perfection by the being conveyed in words the moſt ſimple and artleſs. We ſhall here produce examples of each.

Of genuine ſublimity, a ſtroke univerſally acknowledged to be one of the nobleſt that ever entered into the mind of man, is in the account given by Moſes of the creation *. "Darkneſs (ſays he) was "upon the deep, and the ſpirit of God "moved upon the face of the waters.— "And *God* ſaid—*Let there be light, and* "*there was light!*"—This example of divine eloquence, expreſſed in words ſo ſuited to the majeſty of the ſpeaker, agrees exactly with our deſcription of *ſimple* Compoſition, as conſiſting of words happily ſelected, in which the mind perceives neither abundance nor defect.—In a ſimilar ſpirit of ſublime ſimplicity does Milton pourtray the ſhield of Satan, and the atti-

* Geneſ. i. 3.

tude

tude of this prince of hell treading on the burning lake.

He ſcarce had ceaſed when the ſuperior fiend
Was moving tow'rd the ſhore;—his pond'rous ſhield
Behind him caſt,—the broad circumference
Hung on his ſhoulders like the moon!—Par. Loſt, b. i.

Let the reader try whether this deſcription (ſo completely exhibiting its object) would bear either the addition or tranſpoſition of a ſingle word without being impaired. Yet here is no ornamental epithet. The words themſelves and their arrangement are the moſt natural and ſimple that can be conceived.—Apollo in the Iliad leading on Hector to the deſtruction of Greece, and levelling the mound which the people of that nation had reared for their defence, affords us an example in all reſpects adequate to the former.

—— Προπαροιθε δε Φοιβος Απολλων
Ρει' οχθας καπετοιο βαθειης ωσσιν ερειπων
Εις μεσσον κατεβαλλε· γεφυσωσεν δε κελευθον
Μακρην ηδ' ευρειαν.—
Τη ρ' οιγε ωροχεοντο Φαλαγγηδον, ωρο δ' Απολλων
Αιγιδ' εχων εριτιμον, ερειπε δε τειχος Αχαιων
Ρεια μαλ'.— ΙΛΙΑΔ. Ο.

Apollo planted at the trench's bound
Puſh'd at the bank; down ſunk th' enormous mound:

Roll'd in the ditch the heapy ruin lay,
A ſudden road, a long, and ample way!——
The wondering crouds the downward level trod,
Before them flamed the ſhield, and march'd the God;
Then with his hand he ſhook the mighty wall,
And lo! the turrets nod! the bulwarks fall! &c. *

As in the examples above-mentioned we obſerve the ſimpleſt words conveying the moſt ſublime ideas, ſo in what follows theſe appear to conſtitute *the moſt picturesque* deſcription. An example of this kind incomparably animated, occurs in the fourth chapter of Job, where Eliphaz relates his interview with an inhabitant of the inviſible world, in ſuch language as placeth every circumſtance of this tranſaction before the very eye of the reader.—"In thoughts from the viſions of the night, when deep ſleep falleth on men,—fear came upon me and trembling, which made all my bones to ſhake. Then a ſpirit paſſed before my face: the hair of my fleſh ſtood up. It ſtood ſtill, but I could

* We have here given Pope's tranſlation, in which a reader of taſte may perhaps think, not unjuſtly, that though the *ſublimity* of the original is in this paſſage improved, yet its *ſimplicity* is in a great meaſure loſt.

not

not diſcern the form thereof. An image was before mine eyes:—there was ſilence, and I heard a voice."—What ſimplicity is here in the expreſſion! yet what ſtrength and vivacity in the colouring!—Without the aid of a metaphor, the inſpired writer ſets before our eyes a picture ſo calculated to excite the moſt exquiſite feelings, that it was drawn (one ſhould think) by the pencil of nature herſelf.

Virgil (though his excellence appears to lie rather in throwing pathetic than pictureſque circumſtances into his deſcriptions) yet has wrought up a picture of the ſame kind with that already mentioned, in his account of the ghoſt of Hector, remarkable for the beauties pointed out in the former.

—— Ecce ante oculos mœſtiſſimus Hector
Viſus adeſſe mihi, largoſque effundere fletus!
Raptatus bigis ut quondam, aterque cruento
Pulvere perque pedes trajectus lora tumentes:
Hei mihi qualis erat!—— Æneid. lib. ii.

This mixture of the pictureſque and pathetic, expreſſed with the moſt beautiful ſimplicity, characteriſeth the attitude of Priam in the Iliad, beſeeching his ſon to

enter the city and ſhun Achilles.

Ωμωξεν ὁ ὁ γερων, κεφαλην δ'ογε κοψατο χερσιν
Υψος αναχομενος, μεγα δ'οιμωξας, εγεγωνει
Λισσομενος Φιλον υιον——

The ſimplicity as well as pictureſque beauty of the original is well preſerved in the tranſlation.

Then wept the ſage
He ſtrikes his reverend head now white with age;
He lifts his wither'd arms, obteſts the ſkies;
And calls his much-loved ſon with feeble cries. POPE.

If in the inſtances above referred to, the ſublime and pictureſque in Compoſition appear to be conſiſtent with perfect ſimplicity of language, nervous and forcible deſcription is equally compatible with, and adorned by this diſtinguiſhing excellence. As a proof of this we find Xenophon, who among all the hiſtorians of antiquity excels in the beautiful ſimplicity here recommended, uſing words, when the occaſion demands it, full of energy and ſignificance. In the account of Cyrus's battle with Crœſus, we meet with ſome ſtriking examples to this purpoſe. "There "was then (ſays he, deſcribing the heat "of the battle) a deſperate engagement

"with

" with darts, lances, and ſwords, com-
" menced on both ſides.—There was
" great ſlaughter of men, terrible claſhing
" of arms, and a tumultuous clamour
" raiſed on all hands; ſome congratulat-
" ing their companions, ſome exhorting
" the fearful, and ſome imploring the
" Gods."—When Cyrus's horſe a little after is wounded, the conſequences are thus conciſely, but energetically deſcribed. " Then (ſays he) you might have ſeen
" of what advantage to a prince is the
" love of his ſubjects. For inſtantly all
" ſhouted at once, and ruſhed impetu-
" ouſly to the battle. They drive, and
" are driven; ſtrike, and are ſtruck. One
" of Cyrus's attendants in the mean time
" diſmounted, and placed him on his own
" horſe. But when on horſeback, look-
" ing around him, he ſaw the Ægyptians
" ſlaughtered on all ſides *." The hiſtorian

* The author hath tranſlated this paſſage in the text, leſt ſome readers ſhould be frightened at the ſight of ſo much Greek. But the original is too beautiful to be omitted, and incomparably beyond any tranſlation.

torian was ſenſible that ornament of any kind in a detail of this nature would have been wholly unappropriated. He is therefore principally intent upon making the words correſpond as juſtly as poſſible to the things repreſented by them. Superfluous epithets are therefore avoided; and there is a ſtrength in the expreſſions which conveys to us an idea of that deſperate perſeverance with which the battle was carried on.—So conſiſtent is the moſt perfect ſimplicity with that vigorous language which renders an idea diſtinct by its propriety of phraſe, and its impreſſion dur-

---

Ενθα δε δεινη μαχη ην και δορατων, και ξυσων, και μαχαιρων.—Ην δε πολυς μεν ανδρων φονος, πολυς δε κτυπος οπλων και βελων παντοδαπων; πολλη δε βοη των μεν ανακαλυντων αλληλυς, των δε παρακαλευομενων, των δε θεους επικαλυμενων.—Ενθα εγνω αν τις οσου αξιον ειη τον Φιλεισθαι αρχοντα υπο των αρχομενων. Ευθυς γαρ ανεβοησαν και τε παντες και προσπεσοντες εμαχοντο· εωθυν, εωθυντο, επαιον, επαιοντο. Καταπηδησας δε τις απο τυ ιππυ των τυ Κυρυ υπηρετων αναβαλλει αυτον επι τον εαυτυ ιππον. Ως δε ανεβη ο Κυρος κατειδε παντοθεν ηδε παιομενους τυς Αιγυπτιους, &c. ΞΕΝΟΦΟΝΤ. Κυρ. Παιδ. βιβ. ζ.

able

able by an energy ſuited to the nature of the object.

Simple Compoſition, conſidered as conſiſting of well-adapted words without taking in adventitious ornament, thus characteriſtical as it is of the ſublime, the pictureſque, and the nervous in this art, yet in no caſe whatever is ſeen to higher advantage than when we aſſume the language, or paint the conſequences of paſſion. We have obſerved in a former ſection of this work, that a mind agitated by the conflict of paſſions never adopts a metaphor to expreſs its feelings. A ſudden exclamation juſt inſpired by the occaſion, has an effect upon every mind at theſe times, ſuperior to that which the moſt artful aſſemblage of mellifluous and ornamented periods could ever have produced. Art never indeed appears ſo diſguſting as when we diſcover it (however affectedly concealed) in any purely pathetic repreſentation. In an account of this kind indeed the paſſions may be gradually wrought up to the utmoſt height by a progreſſive and elaborate detail: but in

ſuch a proceſs the author is required to conceal his addreſs at the time; and though upon a cloſer ſcrutiny we may obſerve it with admiration, yet we juſtly impute a defect of judgment to him who lets us enter too ſuddenly into his deſign, as ſuch a conduct always defeats the ultimate purpoſe of his work.

There are, we may obſerve, two methods of rouzing the paſſions to the moſt ſtrenuous exertion, both of which, though different in other reſpects, yet agree in requiring ſimplicity of diction. One is when a climax is carried on, either in reaſoning or in deſcription, from leſſer to more important objects, until the whole becomes highly and univerſally intereſting:—the other ariſeth from ſome judicious and happy imitation of nature in a particular occurrence, when her language is ſo ſignificantly adopted as to make a powerful, as well as immediate impreſſion upon the heart. The difference betwixt theſe lies principally in this, that the effect produced by the firſt method is ſlowly accompliſhed, though an entertainment

agree-

agreeably protracted prepares us imperceptibly to feel it with energy; whereas the laſt preſents a picture whoſe force we immediately acknowledge, and which without preparation makes its way to the heart. Of the former kind are thoſe repreſentations which either ſet one event in a ſtrong and particular point of view, or derive their power from a detail of circumſtances. Here we permit the writer to expatiate at leiſure on every topic of perſuaſion, every ſentiment of compaſſion, every event in which we diſcover even a remote connection with the principal cataſtrophe. That a ſkilful artiſt may by theſe means irreſiſtibly ſtimulate the paſſions, as well as excite the affections of his audience, will not be diſputed by any perſon who is acquainted with either. Yet he who placed himſelf in circumſtances of diſtreſs, or happily imitating that of another, hits off an expreſſion which every mind appropriates as its own, poſſeſſeth this peculiar advantage that he takes the heart as it were by ſurprize; and to the paſſion, of whatever name, excited

cited by him ſuperadds this feeling by which it acquires incomparable poignancy and power. In both caſes, (the laſt however more particularly) we ſhall find the ſimpleſt language producing the happieſt effect. We ſhall here adduce examples of each.

The celebrated ſtory of Lucretia, as told by Livy, affords us a ſignal example of the pathos with which a few unadorned expreſſions may convey an intereſting event to the mind. This heroine, after having ſuffered an indignity which ſhe determined not to ſurvive, ſent one meſſenger for her father, and another for her huſband.—" When theſe arrived (ſays the " hiſtorian) they found Lucretia ſitting " diſconſolate in her chamber. Her tears " ſtreamed at their entrance. To her " huſband's queſtion, whether all was well " with her:—No, replied ſhe; what can " be well with a woman who has loſt her " honour?—The footſteps of another, " O Collatinus, ſaid ſhe, are in your bed. " But my body alone is violated:—my " mind is innocent. Let death be my

" wit-

" witneſs."—After having then conciſely related the tranſaction, ſhe adds in a ſpirit of true heroiſm.—" I, though guiltleſs of " crime, exempt not myſelf from puniſh- " ment, nor ſhall ever violated chaſtity " live by the example of Lucretia. She " pierced her heart, when ſhe had ſpoke, " with a knife concealed under her gar- " ment, and falling forward in the pangs " of death, expired *." In this pathetic tale, related with inimitable ſimplicity, we are dazzled by no adventitious ornament:—a juſt and beautiful affinity takes place betwixt the tranſaction and the words employed to deſcribe it. The hiſtorian paints the whole with a ſpirit ade-

* " Lucretiam ſedentem mœſtam in cubiculo inveniunt. Adventu ſuorum lacrymæ obortæ:—quærentique viro ſatiſne ſalva? " Minime, inquit, quid enim ſalvi eſt mulieri amiſſa pudicitia! Veſtigia viri alieni, Collatine, in lecto ſunt tuo: ceterum corpus eſt tantum violatum, animus inſons. Mors teſtis erit."—" Ego me iſti peccato abſolvo, ſupplicio non libero. Nec ulla deinde impudicitia Lucretiæ exemplo vivet." Cultrum quem ſub veſte abditum habebat, eum in corde defigit, prolapſaque in vulnus moribunda cecidit." Hiſtor. Rom. Scriptores Omn. tom. i. p. 18. Aurel. Allob.

quate

quate to the greatneſs of the action. The crime was quickly committed; the reſolution immediately taken, and unexpectedly executed. The language is therefore perfectly conciſe; and this correſpondence betwixt the colour and the pattern imitated (if we may thus expreſs it), this ſeemingly artleſs, and eaſy narration, conveys the whole with an energy which elaborate deſcription, if it had not annihilated, muſt have greatly impaired.

As we obſerve a pathos of the ſtrongeſt kind to be excited in this inſtance by the narration of one event, in the following paſſage the ſame unaffected ſimplicity characterizeth the language when the detail is copious and circumſtantial.—Tacitus, after having related the life of the celebrated Agricola, and expatiated on the cruelty of the tyrant whom he ſerved, at laſt addreſſes his ſhade in a noble ſtyle of pathetic eloquence.—" Happy Agricola " waſt thou (ſays he), as thy life was illuſ- " trious, and thy exit ſeaſonable !—From " thoſe who witneſſed thy laſt ſcene we " know that thy fate was ſupported with " chear-

" chearfulneſs and reſolution, as if thou
" wouldſt have conſigned thy innocence
" as a legacy to thy prince! But to me
" and thy daughter, beſides the bitterneſs
" of reflecting on a loſt parent, our grief
" is augmented, becauſe we had it not in
" our power to watch thee in ſickneſs;
" to relieve the languor of declining na-
" ture; to ſatiate our deſires by gazing
" on, and embracing thee!—Beſt of pa-
" rents!—Every thing was then no doubt
" performed to thy honour by the moſt
" affectionate of conſorts:—but fewer
" tears, in conſequence of our abſence,
" were ſhed at thine obſequies; and thy
" dying eyes expreſſed unſatisfied deſire.
" If there is a place for the ſpirits of the
" juſt;—if (as philoſophy aſſures us) great
" minds ſurvive the ruin of the body;
" ſerene be thy repoſe*!"—In this ad-
dreſs

---

* " Tu vero felix Agricola non vitæ tantum claritate, ſed etiam opportunitate mortis. Ut perhibent qui interfuerant noviſſimis ſermonibus tuis, conſtans & libens fatum excepiſti, tanquam pro virili portione innocentiam principi donares. Sed mihi filiæque præter acerbitatem parentis erepti auget mœſtitiam quod

dreſs the reader will obſerve a climax finely conducted throughout, the laſt words of which particularly have, from an abruptneſs perfectly natural, a very ſtriking effect.

The impreſſion made upon the heart in theſe, and in many other inſtances of a ſimilar kind, after all becomes no doubt weaker in ſome degree, as during the whole proceſs we obſerve the purpoſe which all is meant to effectuate. There is likewiſe an appearance of art in the round of modulated periods, however ſeemingly flowing and eaſy, which prevents an appeal, how forcible ſoever, from having irreſiſtible energy.—But in that kind of pathos which is produced by a ſudden exclamation, ſtrongly expreſſive of internal feeling in any intereſting occur-

---

quod aſſidere valitudini, fovere deficientem, ſatiari vultu complexu non contigit.—Omnia ſine dubio, optime parentum, aſſidente amantiſſima uxore ſuperfuere honori tuo:—paucioribus tamen lacrymis compoſitus es, & noviſſima in luce deſideravere aliquid oculi tui. Si quis piorum manibus locus, ſi, ut ſapientibus placet, non cum corpore extinguuntur magnæ animæ, placide quieſcas!" Id. tom. ii. p. 279.

rence,

rence, the effect is at the ſame time powerful and univerſal, becauſe the principles here wrought upon are common to all. Here we may ſoon be convinced that declamation or external ornament would be arguments of an exceedingly defective underſtanding.—Nature, in circumſtances of deep diſtreſs, has one voice in every heart; to imitate which juſtly is to excite the moſt powerful principles of perſuaſion that operate on mankind. In this caſe, a man may be ſaid to ſpeak as if he had been deputed by the whole ſpecies, every individual of which adopts his language as his own. The exclamations of David when he heard the account of Abſalom's death, are ſuch as we may ſuppoſe that every father would make uſe of in ſimilar circumſtances. "O Abſalom, my ſon! my "ſon! Would to God that I had died for "thee! O! my ſon, my ſon Abſalom!"—There is inexpreſſible pathos in theſe ſhort repetitions, as they ſhow a mind wholly engroſſed by the contemplation of one object, and unable to depart from it for a moment.

When

When Creon, in the Antigone of Sophocles, finds that by having commanded the ſiſter of Polynices to be buried alive, he had occaſioned the death of his own wife and ſon, how perfectly natural is his behaviour!—"Alas! alas! (ſays he) why "does not ſome man plunge a hoſtile "weapon into my heart?—I, unhappy "wretch, was thy murderer*!"—Deaf to the conſolation of his friends, his mind dwells only on one unhappy object.—"Ah! (ſays he) my ſon! my wife! I "killed you not willingly†!—Wretch

---

* Αι, αι, αι, αι,
Ανεπταν φοβω· τι μ' ουκ ανταιαν
Επαισεν τις αμφιθηκτω ξιφει;
Αθλιος εγω, &c.
Εγω γαρ σ'εγω κακον μελεος
Εγω φαμ' ετυμον.

† Αγοιτ' αν ματαιου ανδρ' εκποδων
Ος ω παι σε γ' ουχ εκων κατεκτα
Ος σε τ'αυταν. Ο μελεος, ουδ' εχω
Οπα προς ποτερου ιδω·——
Ιτω, Ιτω
Φανητω μορων ο καλλις' εμων
Εμοι τερμιαν αγων ημεραν
Υπατος. Ιτω, Ιτω
Οπως μηκετ' αμαρ' αλλ' εισιδω.

ΣΟΦΟΚ. Αντιγ.

"that

" that I am, where ſhall I fly?—Come,
" O death, to my relief, that I may never
" behold another day." In theſe examples it is not the poet, the orator, the man of ſenſibility; it is the father and the huſband that ſpeak. A ſcene like this puts us in mind of an ancient portico, temple, or city, viewed in perſpective. Upon contemplating theſe for ſome time we forget the art of the engraver, and ſtand beneath the mouldering obeliſks of Tadmor; walk through the portals of Perſepolis; recline in the apartments of Darius, and behold the great originals of ancient majeſty and dominion.

II. Having thus conſidered ſimplicity of expreſſion as adorning every branch of animated Compoſition, when no foreign illuſtrations are made uſe of, it remains, in order to complete our view of the preſent ſubject, that when it becomes neceſſary to introduce theſe, we enquire what it is that conſtitutes ſimplicity in the ornamental beauties of diſcourſe.

As there is nothing which ſets every part of a ſubject in a more attractive light

than juſt and appoſite images, ſo the ſtyle of Compoſition requires not, in any point of view, greater delicacy and attention in order to receive the laſt heightening than in the preſent. It is, indeed, a matter of the greateſt difficulty to cull out from the ſtore of imagination, thoſe natural ornaments which give colour and beauty to the arguments of reaſon; and to proportion theſe ſo exactly to the object, as at the ſame time to take in every part of it at once, and to render its impreſſion forcible and permanent. All this is included in the idea of perfect ſimplicity. A ſeries of argumentative ſentiment, however powerfully it may for ſome time arreſt attention by conveying new evidence to the underſtanding, yet in conſequence of that uniform Compoſition, which muſt here be carried on, often becomes tedious, and when the thoughts are abſtracted is almoſt unavoidably obſcure, when it is not diverſified with proper illuſtrations. Theſe are like little openings in a country, otherwiſe uniformly cultivated, which at the ſame time that they preſent ſome new object to

the

the eye, beginning to be ſatiated with its former view, contribute to ſet off to the higheſt advantage ſuch as are already familiar. There are few men in whoſe minds imagination is ſo defective, as not to ſuggeſt many of theſe ornaments in the conduct of an extenſive work:—but the judgment of a writer appears in nothing more conſpicuous than in their propriety and diſpoſition. A ſenſible mind will be offended immediately with a group of illuſtrations, promiſcuouſly ſcattered over a performance without much experience; becauſe, even though theſe may be well appropriated to their objects, it is ſtill at a loſs to diſcover their uſe. Diſguſt ariſeth as much from viewing too profuſe, as too ſcanty a proportion of illuſtrations, becauſe theſe, in fact, loſe their name when applied to truths which are eaſily comprehended, and which require only to be perſpicuouſly expreſſed. The ſimplicity of nature is here likewiſe violated, inconſiſtent as it is with the glare of oſtentation.

In order to preſerve this inimitable excellence in the ornaments of diſcourſe, it is likewiſe neceſſary that the image ſhould exhibit a complete repreſentation of its original, by bringing every part of it ſucceſſively into view. The principal deſign with which metaphors are introduced, is either to explain ſome truth which would have been obſcure, or to render ſome ſentiment ſtriking which would have failed otherwiſe to excite obſervation. To accompliſh the former of theſe ends, the object muſt be fully and diſtinctly repreſented to the mind by an image, as the face is ſhown in a mirror; and to obtain the latter, it muſt be placed judiciouſly in that point of view which contributes moſt effectually to diſplay its propriety. That an object may be diſtinctly placed before the mind, it is requiſite that the metaphor which conveys it ſhould be followed out juſt as far as illuſtration requires, and no farther. Simplicity, as we have already evinced, excludes every degree of ſuperfluity. When images are opened, expanded, and traced elaborately through a

variety

variety of circumſtances, the mind loſes ſight of the original idea:—its proportion is no longer obſerved, and attention flags inſenſibly becauſe it is not kept awake by the current of ſentiment. We may obſerve likewiſe, that in philoſophical, or even ſentimental performances (as they are called), this attention to extend and expatiate upon every minute circumſtance of an illuſtration, uſually indicates ſterility both of the reaſoning and inventive faculty. Of the firſt, becauſe thoughts in this caſe appear to riſe very ſlowly when the mind is ſo intent upon drawing out each with every poſſible enlargement:—of the laſt, becauſe a vigorous imagination is diſplayed by the variety, not the laboured decoration of its images; and by rendering each ſignificant, but neither tedious nor overwrought.

While we avoid in this manner the error of purſuing images too cloſely, we muſt take care not to fall into the oppoſite extreme of *mixing* theſe improperly. This fault is occaſioned by our taking only a partial view of an illuſtration by which its

diſproportion to the original in ſome particular circumſtance eſcapes obſervation. In order to make the whole complete, the mind adopts inſenſibly ſome ſimilar metaphor, and thus jumbles ſeparate images together in the ſame deſcription. A great genius is often led into this fault, by giving a looſe to the exuberance of imagination. When Demoſthenes, ſpeaking of Æſchines ſays, that after lying in wait to deſtroy an honeſt or upright member of the commonwealth, as ſoon as he has found an opportunity to accompliſh his purpoſe, "he burſts like a tempeſt from his place of retreat;" the image here employed is no doubt incomparably expreſſive and ſignificant.—But when immediately after he is deſcribed with the orator's other enemies, "like a wild beaſt furiouſly aſſaulting him;" and in order to preſerve the force of both illuſtrations he concludes with ſaying, that ſuch aſſaults had failed of "rendering him *cold* in the cauſe of his country," we are ſenſible of an improper mixture of images. An adverſary ſallying out like a whirlwind, and carrying

carrying all before him, may be compared with propriety to a tempeſt freezing and deſolating the earth. But the beauty of the firſt epithet (chilling or freezing) is loſt when conſidered as a conſequence ariſing from the aſſault of a wild beaſt, and the images are therefore ſaid to be blended improperly. The reader will find many examples of this fault, even in the beſt works both ancient and modern, which it would be uſeleſs here to enumerate.

True ſimplicity excludes likewiſe from the ornaments of language, all affected brilliance and prettineſs of expreſſion. Little conceits in Compoſition have the ſame effect as improper condeſcenſion in the tranſactions of life. As in the laſt caſe, an exalted character is debaſed by ſuch a circumſtance; ſo in the firſt, the higheſt ſpecies of the art is reduced by this affectation in its value, and its author rendered little and contemptible. Ovid, among all the ancients, appears to have fallen moſt frequently into this fault. The moſt dignified perſonages in his fable, are tainted with this bias of the poet. Thus

Phœbus in his addreſs to Phaeton, though intereſted as a father to diſſuade him from a ruinous attempt, and ſpeaking with fervent affection, yet uſes this low kind of wit (as Addiſon juſtly calls it) by which, ſuppoſing the ſtory to be true, he muſt have greatly ſunk in the reader's eſtimation;

Si mutabile pectus
Sit tibi, *conciliis*, non curribus utere noſtris.
Met. lib. ii.

In the ſtory of Narciſſus, the ſame affectation characteriſeth his deſcription. When the youth, heated in the chaſe, retires to quench his thirſt at the cooling fountain, and firſt beholds with admiration and love his own beautiful face, the poet deſcribes his firſt emotions by ſaying,

Dum ſitim ſedare cupit; ſitis altera crevit;

" while he ſtrived to quench one thirſt he raiſed another," i. e. the thirſt of gazing with conſuming deſire on his own beauty. Theſe childiſh quibbles which the author deſigned for ornaments to this (otherwiſe) noble poem, are incompatible with that ſimplicity which is conſtituted by a natural

tural though happy diſpoſition of the fitteſt words, conveying ideas to the mind with eaſe and perſpicuity.

As we are here, however, conſidering the illuſtrations of diſcourſe, which are not carried on in the preceding examples, we ſhall ſelect one other paſſage from this poet, in which he endeavours to heighten our idea of diſtreſs by compariſon. When Hypermneſtra, in one of his Epiſtles, deſcribes her terror upon having heard the groans of her murdered kindred, and when ſhe trembled every moment for the life of her huſband, ſhe expreſſeth her emotions by ſaying,

Ut leni zephyro fragiles vibrantur ariſtæ;
Frigida populeas ut quatit aura comas;
Aut ſic, aut etiam tremui magis *.——*

" As

* Epiſt. Heroid. p. 136. Edit. Delph. Though the writings of Ovid abound with little faults of the kind here pointed out, yet theſe are eaſily excuſed when we find them abounding likewiſe with ſuch examples of genuine ſublimity, of pictureſque deſcription, of happy ſelection, and of juſt and beautiful illuſtration, as muſt convince every reader that the author poſſeſſed an eminent ſhare of the moſt exalted qualities of the human mind. His account, or rather prophecy

" As fragile reeds vibrate to the gentle
" zephyr; as the leaves of the poplar
" quiver

---

prophecy of the general conflagration in the firſt book of his Metamorphoſis, affords a well known inſtance of ſublimity.

Eſſe quoque in fatis reminiſcitur affore tempus, &c.

In the ſucceeding book, when Phaeton has thrown all nature in confuſion, by having miſmanaged the chariot of the Sun (a thought which a great imagination could alone have conceived) there is a circumſtance ſelected with peculiar propriety in the attitude of Tellus rearing her blaſted head, and addreſſing Jupiter in her laſt reſource The poet, after having painted the univerſal conflagration, makes this perſonage ariſe from the center of her dark dominions. But no ſooner does ſhe face the light, than, before ſhe can utter a word, we are told

Oppoſuit manum fronti, magnoque tremore
Omnia concutiens, *paullum ſubſedit*, & infra
Quam ſolet eſſe ſuit.— Met. lib. ii.

The circumſtance of her clapping her hand upon her head as ſoon as ſhe felt the heat, is natural and pictureſque; but when we obſerve her ſhrinking immediately after, and ſeeking a cooler ſeat before ſhe can ſpeak, we admire the addreſs and genius of the poet, who by this ſingle ſtroke impreſſeth a ſtronger idea of the univerſal ruin that threatened nature, than by any deſcription however elaborate. An imagination truly of a ſuperior order is never evinced more conſpicuouſly, than by fixing on one circumſtance vividly characteriſtical, inſtead of running into minute repreſentation. In the fine poem entitled Carthon, Oſſian

repreſents

" quiver to the gale—I trembled thus, and " even more."—Surely this image is unnatural and affected. A perſon animated by ſome part of the feelings which the recollection of ſo tremendous a ſcene muſt have awakened, would never have uſed any metaphor whatever to expreſs the convulſion of agonized nature, and far leſs one borrowed from objects which are ſhown in the ſport and wantonneſs of fancy.

The moſt perfect examples of ſimplicity in the images with which the ſtyle of Compoſition ought to be embelliſhed, are to be found in the ſacred writings. Of a far different kind from the inſtances formerly mentioned, is the Evangeliſt's deſcription of the ſcene preſented to the aſtoniſhed ſpectators who went on the third day to viſit the ſepulchre of our Saviour!—

---

repreſents the ruins of Balelutha in the ſame manner, by the figure of " a fox looking out at a window." This power of calling out a variety of ideas exhibiting a complete repreſentation of many objects, by the ſelection of one ſingle ſtroke, characteriſeth genius in its utmoſt extent, and is rarely to be found unleſs in works of the greateſt eminence.

" Behold!

" Behold! there was a great earthquake!
" For the angel of the Lord deſcended
" from heaven, and came, and rolled back
" the ſtone from the door, and ſat on it!—
" His countenance was like lightning!
" and his raiment white as ſnow! And
" for fear of him the keepers did ſhake,
" and became as dead men!" Let any reader of the leaſt ſenſibility, compare the feelings excited by this deſcription with thoſe that are rouzed by the preceding one. The tranſaction is related ſo ſimply as to betray no affectation in the writer: yet we ſee the ſtone removed from the ſepulchre, behold the face and appearance of him who ſat on it; and ſhake with the guard who were chilled with amazement at the ſcene!

An effect very different from the former is produced by the following paſſage; yet the ſame unaffected eaſe and ſimplicity of illuſtration give its ſignificance to each. When the Gods are engaged in combat with each other, upon winding up the ſtory of the Iliad, Neptune and Apollo advance with an hoſtile ſemblance, and the

god

god of ocean dares his compeer with ſome pride and ſuperiority to the fight. The dignity of both characters is here to be preſerved; and Homer has ſucceeded wonderfully in keeping up the majeſty of the divine nature in the conduct of Apollo while he retires from Neptune. Neither arrogating equality with, nor acknowledging inferiority to the other, he only ſhows, by an image which has peculiar ſignificance in the mouth of a deity, that the ſubject of their diſpute is not of importance enough to juſtify their contention.

Εννοσιγαι, ουκ αν με σκοφρονα μυθησαιο
Εμμεναι, ει δη σοι γε, βροτων ενεκα πολεμιζω
Δειλων, οι φυλλοισιν εοικοτες, αλλοτε μεν τε
Ζαφλεγεες τελεθουσιν αρουρης καρπον εδοντες,
Αλλοτε δ'αυ φθινυθουσιν ακηριοι.

——— To combat for mankind
Ill ſuits the wiſdom of celeſtial mind.
For what is man?—Calamitous by birth,
They owe their life and nouriſhment to earth;
Like yearly leaves that now with beauty crown'd
Smile on the ſun, now wither on the ground. POPE.

The compariſon which the mind is led by this paſſage to form betwixt the glorious Being who pronounceth theſe words, and

and the creatures to whom they refer, ineffably heightens the effect produced by them. What can be conceived more remote from the immutable eſſence of Deity than leaves ſcattered on earth by the gales of autumn!—Yet what more expreſſive of the fragility of man!

III. We have now conſidered ſimplicity as a character of juſt Compoſition, extending to every ſpecies of this comprehenſive art, and not only conſiſtent with, but required neceſſarily to conſtitute the principal beauties we admire in it.—But the queſtion will here naturally occur,—by what method is this excellence to be acquired?—In anſwer to this enquiry, let it be obſerved, that difficult as ſuch an imitation of nature may be deemed in moſt inſtances, yet it is often hit off moſt happily by thoſe who appear to have aimed leaſt at its attainment. He who thoroughly comprehends his ſubject, and who is attentive rather to that kind of expreſſion which a ſentiment requires, than to thoſe ſuperfluous ornaments which may ſet it off to advantage, will probably convey it

in

in the ſimpleſt and moſt natural language *. A mind in which the underſtanding exerts conſiderable influence, will permit the language to riſe with the thought (if we may thus expreſs it), rather than the thought to be exalted by the expreſſion; as the words in this caſe will always be ſuitable, and every object will be ſhown in *full*, but not in *ſtrained* dimenſions. Thus the ſublime, the rational, the pictureſque, the pathetic, will each exert its *proper* influence on the mind; producing that effect which nature, happily imitated, never fails to accompliſh. When, on the contrary, a ſuperficial ſentiment is elaborately decorated with the pomp of ornamental epithet, a judicious reader is ſenſible, upon recollection, that the part is overacted, and challenges immediately the defect of ſimplicity. A diſproportion appears betwixt the thought ſtript of its ornaments, and the words that

* "Conſperſa ſit oratio (ſays Cicero) verborum ſententiarumque floribus, id non ſuſum per totam orationem, ſed ita diſtinctum, ut ſint quaſi in ornatu inſignia quædam diſpoſita & lumina." De Orat. lib. iii.

convey

convey it, which indicates a correſponding diſproportion of thoſe powers which gave riſe originally to ſo unnatural an aſſemblage.

A certain pedantic affectation may characteriſe the ſtyle of an author's compoſition as much as it may his manners. In both caſes a reader of penetration will impute this fault to the ſame cauſe, a ſtriking defect of the diſcerning faculty. Both therefore may be corrected by the ſame means. Eaſe and elegance of addreſs is obtained by frequenting the beſt company, and by converſing with people whom theſe popular qualities have rendered univerſally agreeable. By theſe means the ruſt of pedantry is gradually filed off, and a man without having practiſed ſlaviſh imitation, becomes aſſimilated to thoſe whom he hath regarded as models, while his deportment ſtill continues to be marked by thoſe radical ſignatures, in their full ſtrength, which nature ſtamps as indelibly on the mind as on the countenance. In Compoſition we ought to proceed in a ſimilar manner. By entering deeply into meta-

metaphyſical ſpeculation, a man who wants that acuteneſs of intellect, that power of developing truth from the chaos of abſtracted definition and plauſible diſtinction, which denominates a maſter in this ſcience, will catch the faults of his original without acquiring his excellence. One philoſopher who thinks deeply, but whoſe diſpoſition is accurate and his language perſpicuous, will acquire imitators, who, unable to enter with real diſcernment into a ſubject, puzzle themſelves and their readers by a conſtant affectation of preciſion; and, incapable of ranging diſtinct objects with accuracy, throw a promiſcuous glare over all. By this abſurd attempt the genuine character of the imitator is *diſtorted* (if we may thus expreſs it), but not *concealed*:—an inequality which might have been overlooked is only called out into conſpicuous light by compariſon, and we ſee not what the man was deſigned for by nature, but what he is rendered by attempting to be more.

In order, therefore, to expreſs our thoughts at the ſame time with preciſion

and ſimplicity, a writer ought to peruſe the moſt approved ſtandards in every literary department, but without a ſettled purpoſe to follow invariably any original whatever. His own manner will form inſenſibly while he is engaged in ſtudying thoſe of others which have obtained approbation; and that diſcriminating bias which cannot be *concealed*, will be ſet off to advantage by being ſhown undiſguiſed. There is an affectation even of *eaſe*, which to a man of true ſenſibility is obvious and diſguſting. Like the aukward geſtures of a pedant affecting to imitate elegance of manners, the real character appears every moment through the diſguiſe, and a diſtorted reſemblance expoſeth it to ridicule *. It is by ſtudying the writings of authors, who themſelves have followed the ſtandard of nature, that we ſhall obtain that expreſ-

* In order to have this obſervation exemplified, an ingenious reader may compare the writings of Addiſon (one of the eaſieſt of authors) with ſome more modern performances. The flowing and elegant language of the former forms a contraſt to ſtiffneſs and affectation, which ſhows theſe in a point of view more conſpicuous than when they are contemplated apart.

ſion

ſion appropriated to every object ſo happily as to admit of no alteration without being injured, which we underſtand by the term *ſimple*. A taſte naturally good may be ſpoiled by being converſant only with faulty and defective models, and a judgment which would have deſpiſed thoſe little conceits that ſometimes ſtand in place of intereſting ſentiment, may be brought to approve and even imitate theſe, when characteriſing the patterns that are ſubmitted to its examination.

SECTION III.

Of Perſpicuous Compoſition.

IT is a truth at the ſame time ſuggeſted by reflection, and confirmed by the concurring teſtimony of all authors who have thought on the ſubject of Compoſition, that one character which ought to diſtinguiſh principally every ſpecies of it without exception, is a certain happy perſpicuity. This excellence goes under dif-

ferent names, as the ſubjects direct to which it is applied *. An ancient critic, who conſiders perſpicuity in as extenſive a view as we are required to take upon this occaſion, explains its meaning ſo pro-

---

* Quintilian denominates perſpicuity the capital excellence of an orator. "Prima eſt (ſays he) eloquentiæ virtus perſpicuitas." Lib. iii. c. 3. But he immediately explains himſelf. "Quo quiſque ingenio minus valet, hac (perſpicuitate) ſe magis attollere, & dilatare conatur, ut ſtatura breves in digitos eriguntur, & plura infirmi minantur." Id. ibid. This would appear at firſt to be an inadequate view of the preſent ſubject, which cannot, as we ſhall ſee afterwards, diſtinguiſh, at leaſt in one important ſenſe, the writings of an author who has a ſmall ſhare of genius. Sometimes this word is uſed to ſignify philoſophical evidence. Thus Diogenes Laertius defines it. Σαφηνεια δε εϛι λεξις γνωριμως παριϛωϲα το νοημενον. Ζεν. βιϐ ζ. The great critic, to whom we have often had recourſe, gives a general definition of perſpicuity which exhibits a full view of it when applied to all ſubjects. Διαφανες δε λεγω ο εϛι μεν ορατον, ου καθ' αυτο δε ορατον ως απλως ειπειν, αλλα δε αλλοτριον χρωμα. Περι ψυχ. βιϐ. β. κεφ. ζ. That vivid repreſentation (ſo different from the perſpicuity of philoſophy) which diſtinguiſheth the poet and the orator, and which may be ſaid to conſtitute this character in their ſpheres, is included in this definition. The medium by which it is obtained, is language properly ſelected.

perly

perly in his general eſtimate, that in order clearly to comprehend its uſe and to diſcover the method of obtaining it, we ſhall ſelect ſuch of his thoughts as are connected moſt nearly with the plan of this eſſay. "Perſpicuity of diſcourſe is conſtituted by the union of purity or ſimplicity, and accuracy. The firſt of theſe (he obſerves) includes all the forms of eloquence he had formerly treated of;—ſentiment, the manner of diſcuſſing a ſubject, expreſſion, &c. But accuracy, ευκρινεια (as he calls it), relates principally to the ſecond of theſe;—the method in which a ſubject is treated. Thoſe ſentiments or propoſitions, which may be denominated pure, are ſuch as either are or ſeem to be common to all in general, and to have nothing in them concealed or abſtracted."—Of theſe he produceth examples.

Purity is here taken in its moſt enlarged ſenſe, as diſtinguiſhing the ſentiment as well as the ſtyle of Compoſition: and it is unqueſtionably true, that this character of the art here treated of, is obtained in the

greateſt perfection by him, who not only treats in ſuch a manner of common ſubjects as to render his ſentiments univerſally intelligible, but who has the art of explaining intricate theories ſo clearly as to make every idea appear obvious and familiar. This moſt probably is our author's meaning *. He proceeds to ſay, that "the method of treating a ſubject "has the neareſt affinity to that purity "which has been explained. A diſcourſe "is diſtinguiſhed by both, when the au-"thor plainly relates a fact; and pro-"ceeding to ſpeak of ſome truth nakedly "laid open, introduceth no foreign cir-"cumſtance into his narration †. By *foreign*

* Should we ſuppoſe him to have meant that purity is inconſiſtent with abſtraction or ſubtlety of ideas, the obſervation would not be juſt. Perſpicuity relates not to the nature of objects, but to the dreſs in which theſe are pourtrayed. It obtains when objects of whatever kind are diſtinctly placed before the mind; and it is violated when theſe are detailed inaccurately. The objects themſelves are of no conſequence.

† Σαφηνειαν τοινυν λογῳ ποιει Ευκρινεια και καθαροτης. Γινεται δε ΚΑΘΑΡΟΣ μεν λογος απασι μεδον τοις προειρημενοις, ενvοια, μεθοδῳ, λεξει, και τοις λοιποις.

foreign circumſtances here, are meant ſuch as are forced in unnaturally without being related to the principal ſubject. An heterogeneous combination of this kind renders a diſcourſe inexplicable, and is indeed incompatible both with juſtneſs of ſentiment, and with perſpicuity of expreſſion. That we may do juſtice to this important branch of our preſent enquiry, we ſhall conſider perſpicuity as a character of juſt Compoſition—as diſcovered in the general diſpoſition of any ſubject whatever, particularly of one that is comprehenſive and complicated:—as appearing with peculiar propriety in abſtracted philoſophical diſquiſition:—and as characteriſing, in a ſenſe higher and more animated than the former, the moſt perfect productions of poetry and eloquence.

λοιποις. Ευκρινεια δε το μεν πλειστον εχει περι την μεθοδον.—Εννοιαι εισι καθαραι αι κοιναι παντων, και εις απαντας ανελθουσαι, η δοξασαι απελθειν βαθεις αφ' εαυτων ουσαι, και γνωριμοι, και μηδεν εχουσαι βαθυ, μηδε περινοημενον. ΕΡΜΟΓΕΝ. περι ΙΔΕΩΝ τομ. πρωτ. τμημ. Γ.

I. We have in a preceding part of this eſſay, endeavoured to explain at conſiderable length the uſe of method in general, and to take a view of the *underſtanding* as wholly occupying this extenſive province. In the preſent, beyond all other employments, judgment may evince the clearneſs or obſcurity of its original conceptions. It hath been formerly obſerved, that in every ſpecies of Compoſition, without exception, a method either concealed or obvious is always carried on, and that while another faculty may ſuperintend the execution diſtinguiſhed by no regularity of procedure; *this* in every rational mind maintains a certain harmony and proportion, or attempts to maintain theſe, difficult as it ſometimes is to obſerve its operations.

The general plan of a work is ſaid to be perſpicuous when it is ſuch as fully comprehends the ſubject to be treated of; and when the ſubordinate parts though having each its proper tendency to promote an ultimate purpoſe, yet coincide not

in

in ſuch a manner as to render the diſpoſition perplexed, but are placed preciſely in the moſt natural arrangement. When an author takes a large compaſs in his work, and propoſeth to include in it a very diverſified ſeries of objects, it becomes neceſſary to form a certain general and methodiſed eſtimate of the whole, of whoſe fitneſs and comprehenſion the reader may pronounce without having entered into minute inveſtigation. It is, however, an high recommendation to a performance in many inſtances, that the method is concealed (when materials leſs diverſified preſent themſelves) and that it opens gradually with new light upon the mind, as a reader is led in this manner imperceptibly and agreeably from one ſtep to another, and never comprehends the full proceſs of reaſoning until he arrives at the end of it. Nor in the conduct of an extenſive plan is perſpicuity violated by the uſe of *digreſſions*, even though we may be unable at firſt to perceive in theſe the moſt diſtant relation to the point in view. When an author diſentangles himſelf

agreeably

agreeably from a little embarraſſment of this nature (as it may be judged), and either elucidates his argument, or renders it entertaining, or accompliſheth both ends at once by this medium, we juſtly form a favourable opinion of his judgment; and the ſentiment is impreſſed on memory more powerfully in proportion as its illuſtration was unexpected,—Let us try an example.

In the noble dialogue on the immortality of the ſoul, entitled Phedon, Socrates, after having endeavoured to prove his point by arguments drawn from the doctrine of contraries giving riſe to each other *, and after having likewiſe attempted to view the ſoul in its ſuppoſed ſtate of pre-exiſtence †,

* His argument is this. All things (ſays he) are produced by their contraries. Beauty, for inſtance, is oppoſite to deformity, juſtice to injuſtice. What is called leſs, muſt have been reduced to that ſtate from greater magnitude:—ſwiftneſs in the ſame manner ariſeth from debility, and ſtrength from weakneſs. Now if every thing ariſeth thus from its contrary,—what, ſays Socrates to his friends, does life give riſe to?—Death. What then muſt death breed?—Unqueſtionably—Life. Φαιδ. τμημ. ιε. 15.

† Id. Τμημ. ιη. &c.

at

at läſt comes to ſhow that it is an immaterial ſubſtance. He illuſtrates this doctrine, as uſual, by compariſon. "The "real eſſence of things (ſays he) equality, "beauty, &c. while external objects are "conſtantly varying, is any change "wrought upon theſe?—There is none, "his friends reply. What then, ſays "the philoſopher, ſhall we pronounce of "beautiful objects, as men, horſes, gar-"ments, &c. are theſe oppoſite to the "former in this ſenſe, that by no method "whatever can they be kept in their ori-"ginal ſtate?—Theſe, it is anſwered, are "always fluctuating.—Of thoſe two then "(reſumes Socrates, after having reaſoned "at length on the ſubject) which does "the ſoul ſeem moſt to reſemble, the di-"vine, or the mortal;—the periſhable, "or the immutable?—The mind, ſay his "friends, we muſt acknowledge reſem-"bles what is unchangeable, and our "body what is mortal *."—By the little circum-

* Αυτη η ΟΥΣΙΑ ης λογον διδομεν του ειναι και ερωτωντες και αποκρινομενοι, ωτερον οσαυτως αει εχει κατα

circumlocution employed here, Socrates' meaning appears perfectly obvious, and his reaſoning at the ſame time is ſtrengthened and elucidated. Another beautiful ſtroke of the ſame kind the reader will find in the note *.

Though

κατα ταυτα η αλλοτ' αλλως; αυτο το ΙΣΟΝ, αυτο το ΚΑΛΟΝ, αυτο Εκαϛον ο εϛι το ΟΝ, μηποτε μεταβολην και ηντινουν ενδεχεται.—Ωσαυτως, εφη, αναγκη, ο Κεβης, και κατα τα αυτα εχειν· τι δε των πολλων καλων οιον ανθρωπων, η ιππων, η ιματιων, η αλλων ωντινωνουν τοιουτων—αρα κατα τα αυτα εχει, η παν τουναντιον εκεινοις, ουτε αυτα αυτοις ουτε αλληλοις ουδεποτε ως επος ειπειν, ουδαμως κατα ταυτα εϛιν; Ουτως αυ εφη ταυτα ο Κεβης ουδεποτε ωσαυτως εχει.—Και κατα ταυτα, αυ πoτερον σοι δοκει ομοιον τω ΘΕΙΩ ειναι, και πoτερον τω ΘΝΗΤΩ;—Δηλαδη, ω Σωκρατες οτι η μεν ΨΥΧΗ τω ΘΕΙΩ, το δε ΣΩΜΑ τω ΘΝΗΤΩ. ΠΛΑΤ. Φαιδ. τμημ. κε. κη.

* When Simmias and Cebes, in the ſame dialogue, have propoſed ſuch arguments againſt the immortality of the ſoul as ſtaggered all the hearers, and appeared to overthrow all that Socrates had advanced, we are told he kept ſilence for ſome time, and obſerving the impreſſion made upon his audience, prepared them to expect that he would clear up their doubts by a little piece of conduct adapted with admirable propriety to the occaſion. Inſtead of making any direct anſwer to the objections, ſtroking Phedon's head, who ſat by him,

Though however, circumſtances apparently digreſſive are thus advantageous in general to perſpicuity, yet in conducting the plan of a work, an author ought to avoid the fault of extending theſe to any diſproportioned length. When this is the caſe, we neceſſarily either loſe ſight of the

---

him, and playing with the ringlets of his hair,—"To-morrow perhaps, ſaid he, Phedon, you will poll "away theſe beautiful locks.—It will probably be ſo, "replied he. Not, ſaid Socrates, if you take my "advice.—Why?—To-day both you and I will per-"form this office upon ourſelves, if our argument is "indeed loſt without hope of recovery." By this beautiful digreſſion (referring to the Argives, who cut their hair and made a vow not to let it grow until they had conquered the Spartans) he at the ſame time teacheth his hearers not to be daunted by the plauſibility of objections, however ſtrong, at firſt view, until theſe have been ſcanned deliberately; and relieves the mind, fatigued with attention, to abſtracted reaſoning, and requiring a pauſe to return to it with alacrity. The ſubject is here likewiſe introduced with great advantage, as it comes in ſome meaſure unexpectedly; and before the philoſopher ſpeaks, we conceive him equal to the ſolution we deſire from him. Circumſtances of this kind, happily introduced and properly conducted, indicate great knowledge of human nature, and a diſcernment well adapted to the purpoſes that ought to be accompliſhed by philoſophical reſearch.

original

original deſign, or purſue it with difficulty; and a performance in which the thoughts taken ſeparately may be clearly expreſſed, will appear as a whole to be compoſed of broken and detached parts without ſymmetry or coherence. In the ſphere of Compoſition, as in that of converſation, a man who rambles in his narration or in his reaſoning, without keeping ſome principal object cloſely and invariably in his view is juſtly cenſured, as deficient in clearneſs of intellectual perception, and as ſhooting without any determinate aim. As, therefore, to take in, and to range in perſpicuous order, the various parts of a complicated ſubject demands comprehenſion, ſo to purſue this order clearly, when once eſtabliſhed, through all its branches, a power is requiſite of fixing the intellectual eye upon ſucceſſive objects ſo ſteadily, as that the more may never prevent us from doing juſtice to the leſs important; and that from impatience to arrive at a favourite topic, we may not hurry too lightly over ſuch as convey not, when contemplated, ſo high a degree of pleaſure. The

firſt of theſe powers cannot be carried by any application beyond certain limits, extended or contracted according to the original ſtrength or debility of the faculties of the mind:—the other may be exerted by any man of moderate underſtanding, who has reſolution to fix his thought, as he may do the external organ of ſight, upon any object whatever, until he gains an habit of viewing it deliberately, and of delineating it with preciſion.

A ſeries of objects thus paſſing ſucceſſively in review before the mind, will by theſe means be ranged in perſpicuous order, and as in a family managed with well-regulated œconomy, where attention not diſtracted by many promiſcuous employments, is beſtowed on each at the proper ſeaſon; ſo here the parts will ſtand together by this ſteady recollection, in ſuch diſpoſition as to give an air of conſiſtency and proportion to the whole. When the firſt draught of a work is completed in this manner, and the principal parts ſketched out, the inferior members fall naturally into their places, each occupying

pying that to which it is beſt adapted. Nothing therefore, further remains to render a diſcourſe perſpicuous in every ſenſe of that expreſſion, than that the language ſhould ſtand in the ſame relation to the ſentiments which theſe laſt maintain reciprocally to each other. This likewiſe will follow in a great meaſure, as a conſequence from the principles here eſtabliſhed. A man is ſeldom at a loſs to convey ideas clearly to others, which he diſtinctly apprehends himſelf. When we are at a loſs for words upon any occaſion to render our meaning explicit, this embarraſſment generally ariſeth from ſome defective view of our ſubject, or from ſome combination of ſimilar ideas, which we cannot eaſily diſcriminate. Let a man thoroughly comprehend, and be deeply intereſted in any buſineſs; he will then expreſs himſelf with energy and fluency. His language however inaccurate, will have ſtrong ſignificance, and he will impart to others thoſe ſenſations with vivacity, which have made a forcible and permanent impreſſion on himſelf.

II. The

II. The perſpicuity here recommended; though it is an eſſential character of Compoſition, without which no ſpecies of it can be either entertaining or inſtructive, yet ought in no caſe to be ſtudied with cloſer attention, than when the mind inveſtigates remote and abſtracted propoſitions. It is exceedingly difficult, when we attempt to carry to its utmoſt limits the power by which that point is perceived, where truth and falſhood are firſt diſunited; to diſtinguiſh from each other objects almoſt perfectly ſimilar ſo nicely, as that plauſible may not be ſubſtituted in place of eſſential difference; and apparent be received as real information. We may judge of truth and error as of empires whoſe boundaries are not accurately ſpecified:—when we have made conſiderable progreſs in the precincts of the laſt without intention, we may ſuſpect ourſelves to have wandered from the right path, and may attempt to regain it. But while this deviation is a matter of uncertainty, reflection only ſerves to augment our embarraſſment, and we can form no juſt and

ſatisfactory concluſion. Thus it is too often with intellectual reſearch, when carried beyond the limits which perſpicuous inveſtigation would preſcribe. Whether this practice of perplexing what we mean to elucidate, ariſeth from the deſire of eſtabliſhing juſt principles upon the moſt ſolid foundation, from the hope of ſubduing difficulty by perſeverence, or (what is moſt common) from the vanity of building new theories, and of exploding former ſyſtems of belief, merely perhaps becauſe theſe have had univerſal influence;—from whichever of theſe cauſes derived, it is certain, that the underſtanding is here made the dupe of the paſſions in many inſtances, by whoſe influence men having been perſuaded to overleap the bounds aſſigned to the reſearches of reaſon, have involved themſelves in the inextricable labyrinth of error.

In order to avoid being miſled in this manner, a man who is ſolicitous to know how far his ſentiments are juſt, and to render theſe perſpicuous, ought to try whether his ideas will ſtand the teſt of com-

compariſon, and of illuſtration particularly from external objects. With regard to the laſt, whatever falls under the cognizance of the ſenſes (ſuppoſing theſe to be unimpaired) is expoſed in a light abundantly conſpicuous. Every eye can diſtinguiſh with eaſe perfect ſymmetry from viſible diſproportion, and conveys to the mind that ſenſation of pleaſure or pain which each is calculated univerſally to excite. A ſentiment, therefore, a propoſition, or a diſtinction that can receive illuſtration by an exact compariſon with ſuch an object, and ſtill more with ſuch a ſeries, we may pronounce, without heſitation, to have been diſtinctly comprehended. Of theſe, on the other hand, that to which no example can be brought perfectly to correſpond; which demands a certain peculiarity of phraſe, or is founded wholly in ſome ambiguous and unexceptionable epithet; ought to be ſuſpected as either having no real exiſtence, or, if it have, as not being thoroughly underſtood.

When a truth is indeed either ſelf-evident, or is clearly derived from certain

general principles, examples are ſuperfluous, and can anſwer no purpoſe. When again the former is of ſuch a nature as to exclude direct compariſon with external objects, ſome real, though diſtant point of reſemblance may be ſelected; or ſome mode of illuſtration, drawn from other ſources, carried on which, may be adapted to ſhow it in the happieſt point of view. But whatever purpoſe an author may propoſe to accompliſh, that of inſtruction is at an end as ſoon as his principles will no longer bear to be enforced in this manner, or are underſtood ſo defectively that it is not attempted.

Theſe general obſervations on the perſpicuity of philoſophical ſentiment, will aſſiſt us in forming ſome judgment of the mode of expreſſion that is beſt adapted to convey it. On this branch of our ſubject it is indeed impoſſible to lay down particular rules; becauſe whatever method a writer may purſue, he will always fail of rendering that clear to his readers which is not fully and diſtinctly comprehended by himſelf. As the firſt ſtep, therefore, to

acquire

acquire this happy characteriſtic of Compoſition, an author muſt be thoroughly acquainted with the nature and quality of his materials, which he will thus know in what manner to digeſt. When this important part of his work is over, like an able artiſt, whoſe tools are prepared and at hand, he will proceed to put each to that uſe for which it was originally fitted. To drop the metaphor here, the author ought to conſider in what dreſs thoughts following each other ſucceſſively in the mind, require to be pourtrayed with the faireſt proſpect of being univerſally intelligible *. To thoſe who are not internally blind, there is a language that will ſet off ſentiment, even in the moſt abſtracted enquiry, to great advantage, in the ſame manner as there is a colour or faſhion ſuited with propriety to every complexion. In general, this may be ſaid to lie in that

* This is agreeable to Quintilian's clear and accurate account of the manner in which Compoſition is carried on. "Paulatim res facilius ſe oſtendent, verba reſpondebunt; compoſitio ſequetur. Cuncta denique ut in familia bene inſtituta in officio erunt."

ſimplicity which though conſiſtent with ſtrength, ſublimity, pathos, and elegance, yet preſerves always the juſt medium betwixt abundance and defect *.

But as in the more abſtracted diſquiſitions of philoſophy, obſcurity is the fault of all others to be moſt ſedulouſly avoided, and perſpicuity the characteriſtic to be principally ſtudied, we ſhall here lay down a few rules by an exact obſervation of which the attainment of this important purpoſe may be facilitated.

1. An author ought then particularly to conſider, as ſoon as he enters upon a work of this kind, by what means a ſeries of thought, naturally cold and unintereſting, may be rendered as agreeable as poſſible; and by what method of procedure an impreſſion may be made moſt ſucceſsfully on that intellectual power to which his diſcourſe is principally addreſſed. Before a theory, recommended by its novelty as well as truth, can be thoroughly eſtabliſhed, an author, however diſtinguiſhed

* Sect. ii. p. 23.

by

by originality, will find that many known truths muſt be repeated, becauſe the greateſt diſcoveries, when ſearched to the bottom, ariſe wholly from principles univerſally acknowledged, combined in ſuch a manner as may lead to ſome unexpected concluſion.—Of theſe even the moſt ſuperficial may appear with ſome meaſure of ſignificance, when the words or *colour* moſt juſtly appropriated to it are happily ſelected. When again this propriety is not attended to as much in the expreſſion of obvious as of abſtracted ideas, the *connection* is loſt, at leaſt to many readers; and a performance in which theſe laſt may be clearly explained, will thus be chargeable upon the whole with obſcurity. The writer, therefore, ſhould always remember, that whatever may be his own character, thoſe of his readers are greatly diverſified. When his purpoſe is only to give information to the underſtanding, this faculty will point out to him the neceſſity of attending to thoſe which guard (if that expreſſion may be uſed) the avenues that lead to it. For this purpoſe he

will attend as cloſely as poſſible, not only to the ſtrain of his compoſition in general, but to that peculiar expreſſion which the parts, taken ſeparately, demand as moſt ſuitable. Thus he will ſometimes (as his judgment may direct) ſtudy eaſe and elegance of phraſe; at others, a ſtyle more forcible and animated: a part will here require a little heightening when the thought is remote, or the argumentation protracted; and by thus varying his compoſition judiciouſly, as his ſubject becomes diverſified, he will obtain the end of rendering his ſentiments intelligible, and their impreſſion permanent.

2. As a means ſtill further to promote perſpicuity in that kind of diſquiſition where this acquirement is at the ſame time moſt expedient and difficult, a man of underſtanding will find it neceſſary to make uſe, as much as poſſible, of ſuch words as are moſt obvious and univerſally underſtood. In the preſent caſe, ſuch a man will be careful as much of rendering his ſentiments obvious and pleaſing, as in another he would be of his external appear-

ance.

ance. He whoſe aſpect is not inviting, endeavours naturally to compenſate for this inconvenience by the ſmile of complaiſance, elegance of dreſs, and inſinuating manners. We would judge ſtrangely of him, if inſtead of attempting thus to palliate circumſtances that create diſguſt, we ſhould find him, on the contrary, ſtudiouſly heightening it by a deportment diſtant and gloomy as his countenance. It is in the ſame manner wholly improper to clothe propoſitions, not eaſily comprehended, in words which, though familiar to ſome ears, are unintelligible to others; becauſe obſcurity is the conſequence of this practice in many inſtances, when there is otherwiſe no perplexity either in the diſpoſition, or language of a performance; and readers are diſcouraged from engaging in a purſuit by this circumſtance, which might otherwiſe have been followed both with pleaſure and information.

" What then!—Is the philoſopher, the " man of ſcience, exalted far *above the* " *level of his kind* by ſtudy, capacity, and " inveſtigation;—is *he* required to debaſe the

" the nobleſt of all acquiſitions, by the uſe
" of inelegant and vulgar phraſeology!
" Ought not ſentiments calculated only
" for the *few*, to be expreſſed in words
" ſuited to their dignity, without regard
" to thoſe for whom they are not calcu-
" lated *!"—Odi prophanum vulgus & arceo,

---

* In very early ages it ſeems to have been the practice of philoſophers to conceal their tenets from the cognizance of the vulgar. Hence the Ægyptian hieroglyphics, ſaid to have been invented by Hermes Triſmegiſtus, came to be uſed as expreſſive of certain myſterious doctrines. Theſe, as divine truths, (according to a maxim of Hippocrates) were only to be communicated to men employed in ſacred offices. Pythagoras (the firſt man who aſſumed the name of philoſopher, vide Cicer. Tuſcul. Queſt. lib. v. c. 3. & Diogen. Laert. in proem.) divided his diſciples into two claſſes, the initiated, and the prophane or uninſtructed, and to theſe he adopted his method of teaching. To the former his principles were explained in the cleareſt manner. To the latter, ſymbols and ænigmas were made uſe of. The celebrated maxim, Εϛι δε παντων χαλεπωτατον εγκρατευμα το γλωττης κρατειν, recorded by Jamblichus, and the ſilence enjoined to his diſciples, that they might learn to know its importance, were probably deſigned by this celebrated philoſopher to inſtruct his followers in the duty of maintaining impenetrable ſecrecy with regard to certain myſteries, and of digeſting properly thoſe truths

arceo, is the language of this apoſtrophe. To thoſe who uſe it, we would obſerve, that

---

truths which were to form the ſubjects of their inſtructions. That Pythagoras never propoſed to keep up this ſtyle of obſcurity upon all occaſions, muſt be obvious from the effects which his doctrines are ſaid to have produced upon almoſt all claſſes of mankind. When he travelled through Italy, we are informed by one author, that he made many good as well as learned men, two in particular (Zeleucus and Charondas) eminent lawgivers. Diogen. Laert. lib. viii. By another, that he civilized nations, reſtored liberty to cities, converted thouſands at once to his philoſophy, and even prevailed on women to give up ſome part of their ornaments. Porphyr. Juſtin. lib. xx. c. 4. This conduct diſcovers knowledge of mankind in a very high degree, and is a proof that Pythagoras meant not to ſcreen his philoſophical tenets behind the veil of myſtery. The language he uſed muſt have been perfectly obvious, and levelled to all capacities, when it produced ſuch effects. The ancients in general, we may obſerve, had reaſon in the early ages of ſcience to affect a myſterious air upon ſome occaſions, as from reverence to their perſons, men were thus induced to hold their doctrines in ſuperior eſtimation. Ignorance (which is ſome ſenſe became here the mother of inſtruction, as ſhe is ſaid to have been of devotion), rendered the vulgar credulous with regard to any pretenſions of men whoſe knowledge produced the happieſt conſequences on ſociety. Thus the barbarous Romans were civilized by Numa, becauſe they believed his laws to have been dictated by a divine Being.

that there is a juſt medium betwixt affected pomp, and real meanneſs of expreſſion, as much as there is of dreſs betwixt the tinſel of a beau, and the rags of a beggar. This medium, in the preſent caſe, lies in ſtudying an eaſy, natural, unforced expreſſion, whoſe ſtrength ought to be proportioned to that of the thought; and in which thoſe ſounding epithets that may have propriety and ſignificance upon other occaſions, ought rarely, if ever, to be admitted.

3. The laſt rule we ſhall here lay down for the attainment of perſpicuity in this province of ſcience, is that an author ought to avoid in it, as much as poſſible, running into tedious and protracted periods. There are, indeed, caſes in which a full and modulated ſentence produceth a very ſtriking effect; and it is, no doubt,

---

Being. The legiſlator appeared with ſuitable dignity, and his inſtitutions were received with reverence. The vanity of mankind was likewiſe artfully flattered by this conduct, as each man believed the leader to ſurpaſs himſelf, not by ſuperior abilities, but by the capricious favour of a divinity.

poſſible

poſſible to conduct it, when conſiſting of many members, and including great variety of objects, to a cloſe without violating perſpicuous order. Thus in the concluſion of an eloquent diſcourſe, in which ſome point of importance hath been preſſed home upon the mind, and different topics ſelected for this purpoſe, it is often highly proper to ſum up ſuch as have greateſt energy in a well conducted climax, as after having been ſeparately illuſtrated, their combined influence accompliſheth an intereſting purpoſe. Upon other occaſions, the end either of perſuaſion or of conviction is gained more effectually by enumerating ſeveral diſtinct motives or arguments at once, than by any other expedient; becauſe the mind can feel an effect from all acting with united energy, and concentrating (if we may thus expreſs it) their force in one point; which conſidered apart from each other, theſe could never have produced. This happens when collateral evidences and incidental circumſtances occur in a diſcourſe, whoſe ſignificance ariſeth from their being contemplated

in

in union. But in the inſtance here preſented to us, reflection will immediately convince us, that ſuch a procedure is neither neceſſary nor proper. When ſeveral arguments or motives of conduct are placed in one point of view, their influence obviouſly depends on their being univerſally underſtood. Each therefore, being comprehended as ſoon as it is mentioned, the mind proceeds without interruption in its career, feeling at laſt the full effect, which all taken together are intended to produce *. But a ſentiment whoſe truth we

* No writer, either ancient or modern, underſtood more thoroughly the force of both the methods of perſuaſion and conviction mentioned here, than the illuſtrious Roman orator and philoſopher. When Africanus (in his ſublime viſion of that great leader) informs his deſcendant of the immortality of the ſoul, he puts together ſeveral circumſtances, whoſe impreſſion is ſtrong from being placed before the mind in one view. "Tu vero enitere, & ſic habeto. *Te* non eſſe mortalem, ſed *corpus hoc*. Nec enim *Tu* is es quem forma iſta declarat, ſed *Mens* cujuſque is eſt quiſque, &c. *Deum* te igitur ſcito eſſe: ſiquidem *Deus* eſt qui viget, qui ſentit, qui meminit, qui prævidet, qui tam regit & moderatur & movet id corpus cui præpoſitus eſt quam hunc mundum princeps ille Deus; & ut mundum

we do not immediately perceive, and far more a ſucceſſion of theſe whoſe connec-

---

dum ex quadam parte mortalem, ipſe Deus æternus, ſic fragile corpus animus ſempiternus movet." Somn. Scipion. He paſſeth over, as incidental circumſtances, the principal events of the life of Scipio, to whom he addreſſed himſelf, that he might haſten to the moſt momentuous of all.—There is great propriety in this conduct. The illuſtrious actions of Scipio, placed here in one group, prepare us for the laſt ſcene, which otherwiſe would have made no adequate impreſſion. " Quum autem Carthaginem deleveris, triumphum egeris, Cenſorque fueris, & obieris Legatus Ægyptum, Syriam, Aſiam, Græciam; deligere iterum abſens conſul bellumque maximum conficies, Numantiam exſcindes. Sed quum eris curru in Capitolium invectus *offendes Rempublicam*, &c. *Hic* tu Africane oſtendas opportebit patriæ, lumen animi, ingenii, conciliique tui." Ibid.—When, again, he enters into cloſe reaſoning, his ſtyle is indeed clear and forcible, but conciſe at the ſame time, and diveſted of all ſuperfluity.—" Quod ſemper movetur æternum eſt. Quod autem motum affert alicui quodque ipſum agitatur aliunde, quando finem habet motus, vivendi finem habeat neceſſe eſt. Solum igitur quod ſeſe movet, quia nunquam deſeritur a ſe nunquam ne moveri quidem deſinit. Quinetiam cæteris quæ moventur hic fons, hoc principium eſt movendi. Principio autem nulla eſt origo. Nam ex principio oriuntur omnia. Ipſum autem nulla ex re oriri poteſt. Non enim eſſet hoc principium quod gigneretur aliunde. Quod ſi nunquam oritur, nec occidit quidem unquam." Ibid.

tion,

tion, though cloſe, is unfolded with difficulty, muſt be explained with preciſion, and the embarraſſment of protracted periods ought to be avoided when it requires attention to purſue the thread of a ſubject carried on in few words, and with ſimple illuſtrations. While an author goes forward in this accurate manner, adapting his expreſſion and images with exact propriety to their objects, he can never be in hazard of extending his reſearches beyond the province aſſigned to reaſon; and his diſtinctions, however ſubtle, will have *that real* (not *nominal)* truth, which a reader of diſcernment will comprehend with ſatisfaction.

III. The ſubject of this ſection as far as we have yet purſued it, characteriſeth the ſpheres of philoſophy and hiſtory. When we apply it to poetry and eloquence the word is of higher import, and includes that lively painting which gives peculiar energy to every idea, and greatly heightens its impreſſion. We enter by this means not only into the meaning, but into the ſpirit of an author, and become ſpectators

of

of the ſcenes that are preſented to us. This is, indeed, the capital excellence of thoſe branches of Compoſition which are ultimately addreſſed either to the paſſions or the imagination. Of theſe (in moſt caſes) the moſt diverſified, and perhaps the moſt difficult taſk is aſſigned to the orator. It is his buſineſs to unite perſpicuous reaſoning with animated and beautiful deſcription. Without the former, the principal purpoſe of his art muſt remain unaccompliſhed, and without the latter, the particular application of his arguments can neither penetrate the heart, nor operate on the conduct. When Quintilian denominates perſpicuity the capital excellence of an orator, he muſt have underſtood the phraſe in the ſenſe here aſſigned to it. He would not have called that character of the ſtyle of Compoſition the principal one, which he repreſents as in the power of every mad writer of mean parts, who recommends his performance by this quality, when he can do ſo by no other. By ſuch an aſſertion he would have debaſed an art which he juſtly ex-

plains as one of the nobleſt to which the mind of man is adequate. It is therefore evident, that this author takes the term Perſpicuity here in its moſt enlarged meaning. He underſtands by it, that ΕΝΑΡΓΕΙΑ, as the Greeks call it, that emphatical and animated expreſſion, by which an accompliſhed orator, ſpeaking to the heart of man, obtains the perfection of his art.

In the province of ethical or didactic poetry, where leſs ornament is required than in any other, this vivid repreſentation is highly uſeful, as it impreſſeth a thought at the ſame time upon the power of imagination, and that of remembrance. Here however, that it may accompliſh this purpoſe, the imagery muſt be juſt and perfectly appropriated.—" Honourable age (ſays the author of the Wiſdom of Solomon) is not that which conſiſteth of a number of years, neither is meaſured by length of days. But *wiſdom is the grey hairs* to man, and *an unſpotted life* is *old age*." This juſt and inſtructive obſervation acquires a light, and an expreſſion ineffably ſtriking from the colours here caſt

caſt on it which cannot eſcape a reader of the leaſt ſenſibility. To ſay merely that the author's language is perſpicuous, in the common ſenſe of that epithet, would be a repreſentation of it extremely inadequate. It is pictureſque in an high degree; and we obſerve a ſentiment in its full force expreſſed in very few words, which might have been expatiated upon to much leſs purpoſe through many a period.

The graces of Compoſition, by whoſe aid this ſtriking repreſentation is carried on, are indiſpenſably requiſite to characteriſe every other branch of the poetic art. The mind can never be raiſed to any pitch of enthuſiaſm, unleſs the objects that paſs ſucceſſively before it are not clearly, but vividly diſplayed *. The paſſions muſt be wrought into commotion by na-

---

* Δει δε τυς μυθυς συνιςαναι, και τη λεξει συναπεργαζεσθαι, οτι μαλιςα προς ομματων τιθεμενον. Ουτω γαρ αναργεςατα ορων ωσπερ παρ' αυτυς γιγνομενος τοις πραττομενοις, ευρισκοι το πρεπον, και ηκιςα αν λανθανοιτο τα υπεναντια.

ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤ. περι ΠΟΙΗΤ.

tural and pathetic exhibitions; and we ſpeak to the heart only, when circumſtances of diſtreſs are ſo particularly enumerated, and ſo juſtly painted, as that the reader may be led to feel theſe as his own. It is by no means neceſſary to effectuate theſe purpoſes, that the ſtyle of Compoſition ſhould always be diſtinguiſhed by colouring. Arguments forcibly expreſſed, facts emphatically related, and appeals to the underſtanding or the paſſions, drawn from theſe ſources, and properly pointed to operate on either, become not only clear, but highly intereſting, and accompliſh the ends to which theſe branches of the art are directed.

Theſe general obſervations on perſpicuity, as it relates to poetry and eloquence, it was proper to throw out here, that we might give this ſubject its full extent. It will be conſidered more particularly when we come to treat of the two arts ſeparately, as forming important ſpecies of the ſubject of this eſſay.

IV. From the remarks we have made on perſpicuous Compoſition, it will be

eaſier

eaſier to develope the cauſes to which the defect of this character ought to be aſcribed. Theſe are diverſified according to the taſte and complexion of the writer. Some men, who poſſeſs a comprehenſive and penetrating judgment, without an adequate proportion of imagination, beſtow ſo much attention on the ſentiment of a performance that they are ſatisfied when the expreſſion is rendered intelligible to themſelves. The human mind is ſurely viewed by ſuch perſons in a very defective light, and we may pronounce that underſtanding, however comprehenſive, to have formed a partial eſtimate in this inſtance, which appears to have judged of all others as correſponding exactly to its own ſtandard. An author ought therefore to remember, that few readers are capable of entering as much into the ſpirit of a work as the writer himſelf, and that of thoſe who are capable, ſtill fewer will ſit down to read merely for inſtruction, when their attention is not kept awake by the charm of variety. This, indeed, ſometimes proceeds from the defect of imagination, and

ſometimes from not having attended to its real value and importance in the ſphere of Compoſition.

An extreme of any kind is always pernicious, and by running from one into another a man often falls into that very error which he moſt ſedulouſly ſtudied to avoid. Oppoſite cauſes produce, in this inſtance, the ſame conſequence. As the former of theſe ſeem to require that every reader ſhould poſſeſs as great a ſhare of judgment, and ſhould beſtow as much attention on their writings as they have done themſelves, the latter, by taking a courſe directly contrary, demand of their readers acuteneſs, diſcernment, and the quickeſt ſenſibility. Authors diſtinguiſhed by exuberance of imagination, become often obſcure by giving too much ſcope to it, as they are either hurried by it into digreſſions, whoſe connection with the principal ſubject the reader may not be diſpoſed, perhaps may not be capable of tracing with accuracy; or as the natural proportions of an object are concealed by the luxury of its colour. Theſe are faults into which the

the greateſt geniuſes are ſometimes betrayed *.

Another ſet of writers fall into obſcurity by an affectation of conciſeneſs.

—— Brevis eſſe laboro,
Obſcurus fio. HOR.

It is equally injudicious to croud thoughts together too cloſely, as it is to lengthen out a few into great compaſs by verboſe expreſſion, and tedious declamation. By the firſt method, a general air of obſcurity is caſt upon a work, even when particular objects may be diſtinctly exhibited, juſt as a confuſed idea is excited by a multitude of people ſtanding cloſely together, among whom however the individuals are ſtill diſtinct from each other, and only require to be placed at ſome diſtance. This fault as inconſiſtent with ſimple, as well as with perſpicuous compoſition, we have treated of and exemplified ſo particularly in a

* See this ſubject explained more particularly, vol. i. It is illuſtrated at large, with regard to its effects on Compoſition, by an application to the Odes of Pindar, in the author's Eſſay on Lyric Poetry, Let. ii. p. 111. octavo edit.

preceding ſection, as to render an enlargement here unneceſſary *.

The laſt, and indeed the moſt common ſource of obſcurity in Compoſition, is the ambition of attempting to perform more than we are able, and fixing on a ſubject the parts of which we cannot range in any juſt diſpoſition.

Sumite materiam veſtris qui ſcribitis æquam
Viribus, & verſate diu quid *ferre recuſent*,
Quid *valeant humeri*. Cui *lecta* potenter erit res
Nec facundia deſeret hunc, neque lucidus ordo. HOR.

An author who hath paid no proper attention to this rule, muſt neceſſarily be involved in inextricable difficulties, and his thoughts muſt be vague, inaccurate, and undigeſted. Many ſentiments riſing unformed while the mind takes a view of ſome comprehenſive theme, without cool recollection its views are apt to be diſtracted, and without compaſs inadequate. Like the diſcourſes of which Cicero complains among his contemporaries, "nothing in this caſe will occupy its proper "place. Senſe will be loſt amidſt the

* Sect. i.

"mul-

" multitude of words, and that which " ought to have conveyed light to the " mind, will only involve it in obſcurity " or darkneſs *." He therefore, upon the whole, who would write with perſpicuity, after having methodiſed his ſubject, ought to avoid making uſe either of ſuperfluous, uncommon, or ambiguous expreſſions. To obtain this character his digreſſions muſt be natural, (particularly in the higher ſpecies of Compoſition) his alluſions apt, his characters marked with diſcriminating peculiarities, and his illuſtrations fitted with exact conformity to their objects.

---

* " Res ſimulac Fuſius aut veſter æqualis Pomponius agere cæpit non æque quid dicant niſi admodum attendi intelligo. Ita confuſa eſt oratio, ita perturbata nihil ut ſit primum, nihil ut ſecundum tantaque inſolentia ac turba verborum ut oratio quæ lumen adhibere rebus debet ea obſcuritatem & tenebras afferat, ut quodammodo ipſi ſibi in dicendo obſtrepere videantur." De Orat. lib. iii. cap. 13.

SECTION IV.

Of elegant Compoſition.

ELEGANT Compoſition is a phraſe applied to writings in which we ſuppoſe that there are certain peculiar graces diſtinguiſhing the ſentiments, and ornamenting the language in which theſe are conveyed. Under theſe two heads therefore, we ſhall conſider this character of the art here treated of, that thoſe readers who have uſed this expreſſion without comprehending thoroughly its import, may be able to diſtinguiſh real from apparent elegance, and may appropriate to the word ſome determinate meaning.

I. It will be acknowledged by every man who beſtows any reflection on this ſubject, that the word Elegance, to whatever objects it may be applied, ſtands in oppoſition to ruſticity, and rudeneſs. Whatever is ſordid, mean, and vulgar, either in a man's opinion, deportment, or even dreſs, denominates inelegance when prevailing in any obvious degree; but when

when predominating conſpicuouſly excites diſguſt and averſion. As the term elegant therefore excludes, in all ſenſes, the coarſe and diſagreeable from entering into its objects, ſo the word refinement (a phraſe often uſed without much propriety) denotes the higheſt proportion of this character, in which ſo little alloy is to be obſerved as ſerves to heighten, rather than debaſe the object, and throws additional luſtre on what is truly beautiful, by the foil that is oppoſed to it.

Sentiments either in a ſeries of cloſe reaſoning, or in looſer miſcellaneous obſervation, may be ſaid to have elegance when theſe are ſo artfully ranged, and ſo happily expoſed, as to be ſhown always in the moſt pleaſing point of view. In a diſcourſe levelled againſt the abſurdities, the vices, or the follies of mankind, the ultimate purpoſe is by no means agreeable; and it is therefore neceſſary, that prejudices ſhould be attacked with much circumſpection in order to be effectually eradicated. Opinions that are riveted by time,

time, and habits that have been ſtrengthened by indulgence, cannot be ſucceſsfully combated, unleſs the arguments by whoſe uſe it is propoſed to impreſs conviction on the underſtanding, are enforced by circumſtances that ſoothe and attack the imagination. In this proceſs it is obvious, that one falſe ſtep will overturn a whole ſyſtem, and will induce the mind to reject it as abſurdity. Inſtead of liſtening with impartiality to the ſpeaker or the writer on ſuch an occaſion, we are diſpoſed, on the contrary, either to ſearch out miſtakes and fallacies in his reaſoning, or to ſupport our own ſentiments, however irrational, by calling argument to the aſſiſtance of paſſion. For as it is an eaſy matter to convince or to deceive reaſon by plauſible appearances when the paſſions are once intereſted againſt it, ſo it is, on the other hand, extremely difficult to gain the approbation of the former of theſe, without at the ſame time influencing the latter. Both can then only be brought to concur in one ſentiment, when thoughts are combined

bined in ſuch arrangement as that the unpleaſing part is caſt into a ſhade, and the moſt beautiful ſide is expoſed to view. Elegance of ſentiment muſt diſtinguiſh every work in which this purpoſe is accompliſhed. Gentle and inſinuating eloquence ſteals into the heart upon ſuch an occaſion, and diſpoſeth us to liſten to the perſon by whom we are addreſſed, by eſtabliſhing a prepoſſeſſion in his favour.

1. This purpoſe is accompliſhed in ſome caſes, when, inſtead of addreſſing roughly an individual, ſtimulated by the impulſe of a ruling paſſion, he is led, by general obſervations apparently levelled at no particular object, to ſee the effects that ariſe from indulging it. A beautiful example of this kind occurs in the Iliad. When the Greeks are juſt returned diſpirited from an unſucceſsful battle, and their leader, either as an expreſſion of his own ſentiments, or as a trial of theirs, propoſeth to leave their conqueſt uncompleted; Diomed replies, with an inſolence and ferocity deſerving a ſevere reprimand. After having accuſed the prince of puſillanimity

and

and cowardice, he profeſſeth his own delight in war, and his reſolution to continue himſelf before Troy, though all the other Greeks ſhould deſert it. Neſtor with great propriety attempts to cool this ardour. But inſtead of directly reprimanding a young hero, fired by a ſuppoſed injury, and impatient of reproof, he, on the contrary, elegantly compliments him on the freedom and boldneſs of his addreſs; and after having thus put him in good humour, artfully throws in the following reflection.

Αφρητωρ' αθεμιστος, ανεστιος εστιν εκεινος
Ος πολεμου εραται, επιδημιου, οκρυοεντος. ΙΛΙΑΔ. I.

Curs'd is the man, and void of law and right,
Unworthy property, unworthy light,
Unfit for public rule, or private care,
That wretch, that monſter, who delights in war. POPE.

There is great delicacy in this conduct, as the paſſions by which Diomed would have been blinded are laid aſleep; and his reaſon is at leiſure to perceive and to apply in its full force the ſucceeding obſervation. It is from ſuch inſtances as theſe, that the eloquence of Neſtor, in the Iliad,

is

is ſaid by Quintilian to be characteriſed by a ſweetneſs inexpreſſibly pleaſing *.

In the fine addreſs of Cæſar to the Roman ſenate, whom he would have perſuaded to pardon Cataline, we meet with a ſimilar inſtance of ſentiment elegantly applied, not merely to influence the conduct of an individual, but to regulate the determination of an illuſtrious aſſembly. On the part of Cæſar great addreſs was here peculiarly requiſite, becauſe the cauſe in which he ſpoke was univerſally odious, and becauſe he himſelf was ſuſpected to have been engaged in the conſpiracy. Knowing, therefore, that his audience was equally prejudiced againſt the conſpirators and their advocate, he introduceth his diſcourſe with ſome general obſervations deſigned to ſtrike at theſe prejudices without giving offence to individuals.—"All "men, ſays he, conſcript fathers, who "conſult about dubious affairs, ought to "judge of theſe with a diſpaſſionate

* "Ex ore Neſtoris dixit dulciorem melle profluere ſermonem, qua certe delectatione nihil fingi majus poteſt." Lib. xii. c. 10.

"temper,

" temper, uninfluenced equally by anger, " friendſhip, hatred, or pity. The mind " perceives not truth eaſily when theſe " paſſions interfere *." This introduction is calculated with great propriety to make every perſon turn his eyes inward, and conſider the ſtate and impartiality of his mind. The orator then proceeds to enumerate particular examples of the miſeries that had ariſen from the defect of this temper; and in the end he applies the whole with maſterly addreſs to the affair of Cataline. The crimes of the conſpirators by this conduct are artfully veiled; the beſt ſide of the object is only expoſed to the eye of the ſpectator; and thoſe very paſſions are at laſt powerfully ſtimulated in a bad cauſe, whoſe influence at firſt was ſo profeſſedly diſclaimed.

2. Elegance of ſentiment as it thus requires in ſome inſtances what is unpleaſing to be ſhaded, and what has either real

* " Omnes homines P. C. qui de rebus dubiis conſultant ab odio, amicitia, ira, atque miſericordia vacuus eſſe debet. Haud facile animus verum providet ubi illa officiunt." Conjurat. Catal.

or apparent beauty to be ſhown in all its attractions, ſo in others we obſerve and acknowledge it more obviouſly to predominate, when in cloſe argumentation an adverſary is confuted without having reaſon to feel that mortification which ariſeth from this circumſtance; and whoſe vanity is rendered ſubſervient to his inſtruction, by being gratified at the time that his reaſoning is diſproved. Of this addreſs no man ever was a greater maſter than Socrates, who puts it in practice ſucceſſively upon every occaſion when he is engaged with men who could not otherwiſe be drawn into converſation.—When Euthyphron acquaints him, that he had come to the Areogapus to proſecute his father for murder, and attempts to juſtify his conduct by telling ſome childiſh ſtories of Jupiter's conduct to Saturn; Socrates, inſtead of laughing at his folly, applies himſelf to his ruling paſſion, and refutes his principles, while he appears willing to adopt thoſe as his own. After having ſounded the depth of his antagoniſt, and brought him to acknowledge that he be-

lieved the Gods to differ often from each other in opinion, he thruſts a vein of refined irony into his diſcourſe, and raiſeth ſcruples in the mind of Euthyphron, upon his own principles with regard to the juſtice of his cauſe, happily calculated to make him deſiſt from the proſecution.—

" Excellent Euthyphron (ſays he), ſince you
" ſay that the gods form different judg-
" ments of right and wrong, truth and
" falſhood, and act according to theſe
" judgments, you have not yet explained
" to me the nature of holineſs; for I did
" not aſk you what is at the ſame time
" ſacred and prophane, pleaſing to one
" god, and diſagreeable to another:—ſo
" that it would not be wonderful if you,
" by getting your father puniſhed, ſhould
" do an action agreeable to Jupiter, but diſ-
" agreeable to Cœlus and Saturn; pleaſing
" to Vulcan, but offenſive to Juno; and
" judged of differently by the other deities
" according to the character of each *."

3. In

* Ουκ αρα ο προμην απεκρινω, ω θαυμασιε. ϗ γαρ τϗτο γε πρωτων, ο τυγχανει ταυτον ον οσιον τε και ανοσιον·

3. In many inſtances likewiſe, a peculiar degree of elegance is diſcovered in turning a thought (principally of the panygirical kind) ſo happily as may ſurpriſe the reader into immediate approbation. This happens, moſt commonly, when there is an artful diſpoſition of circumſtances concurring to throw light on ſome object, at once agreeable and unexpected. Of the kind here mentioned, is the following noble complement to Cato, in which the poet ineffably heightens his eulogium by a previous enumeration of grand and terrible circumſtances.

Jam nunc minaci murmure cornuum
Perſtringis aures: jam litui ſtrepunt;
Jam fulgor armorum fugaces
Terret equos, equitumque vultus.
Audire magnos jam videor duces
Non indecoro pulvere ſordidos!——

ανοσιου· ο δ' αν Θεοφιλες η και Θεομισες εϛιν, ως εοικεν. Ωϛε ω Ευθυφρον ο συ νυν ωοιεις τον ωατερα κολαζων, ουδεν θαυμαϛον ει τουτο δρων, τω μεν Δι ωροσφιλες ωοιεις, τω δε Κρωνω και τω Ουρανω εχθρον. Και τω μεν Ηφαιϛω φιλον, τη δε Ηρα εχθρον. Και ειτις αλλος Θεων ετερος ετερω διαφερεται ωερι αυτου, και εκεινοις κατα ταυτα, &c. ΠΛΑΤΩΝ. Ευθυφ. τμημ. Θ.

Et *cuncta terrarum ſubacta*——
Præter *atrocem animum Catonis* * !

The concluding circumſtance here, every reader will allow to have elegant beauty in its preſent connection. Even thoſe, however, who are actuated by prejudice againſt the authors of Chriſtianity, will, perhaps, acknowledge the apoſtle Paul's anſwer to king Agrippa to have merit (though not preciſely of the ſame kind) in all reſpects equal to that of the courtly Roman in the preceding inſtance.—"Al-" moſt (ſays the prince to him) thou per-" ſuadeſt me to be a Chriſtian." To which the apoſtle (ſtanding in chains before his throne) replies: "I would to God that " not only thou, but alſo all that hear me " this day were both almoſt and alto-" gether, ſuch as I am,—*except theſe* " *bonds*." The laſt words here, as in the former example, are peculiarly ſtriking. They give a polite air to the apoſtle's anſwer, and conſtitute what the ancients denominate urbanitas, and the verſutum &

* Hor. Carmin. lib. iv. ode 1.

lepide

lepide dictum. Its effect upon Agrippa diſcovered the propriety with which it was applied to him; for he was prevented from ſetting his priſoner at liberty only becauſe he had appealed to Cæſar.

4. The laſt method we ſhall mention here, of rendering ſentiment elegant, conſiſts in the artful introduction of a principal topic from circumſtances whoſe connection with it, though cloſe and particular, the mind does not perceive until it ſlides in as it were imperceptibly, and attracts attention by being careleſsly repreſented. This appearance of the character treated of here, is rarely to be met with; and only in works of great ingenuity.—In Pope's excellent Preface to his miſcellaneous writings, he propoſeth to diſclaim many performances that had been aſcribed to him, as unworthy that honour, and to prevent, if poſſible, a repetition of this abuſe. The manner in which he brings about his purpoſe is admirable.—"I be-
"lieve (ſays he, ſpeaking of himſelf) no
"one qualification is ſo likely to make a
"good writer as the power of rejecting

" his own thoughts, and it muſt be this " (if any thing) that can give me a chance " to be one. For what I have *publiſhed* " I can only hope to be pardoned; but " for what I have *burned*, I deſerve to be " praiſed. On *this account* the world is " under ſome obligation to me, *and owes* " *me the juſtice in return to look upon no* " *verſes as mine that are not inſerted in* " *this collection.*" Here the author's principal end falls, as it were, incidentally into his diſcourſe: no reader, without having been previouſly acquainted with his purpoſe, would expect it to be introduced here. Yet the connection is natural, and we approve at the ſame time of the writer's judgment and addreſs.

II. Difficult as it may appear from the preceding obſervations, for an author to be diſtinguiſhed by elegance of ſentiment, yet even when this point is obtained, ſomething further is ſtill requiſite to conſtitute elegant Compoſition, if we include under that phraſe all that it ought to ſuggeſt. This ſomething, ſo neceſſary to give the laſt heightening to this character, is undoubt-

undoubtedly an expreſſion happily correſponding to theſe ſentiments, and ſetting off all to the higheſt advantage. An eminent critic obſerves of ſtyle in general, "that of ſuch importance is this ſingle "circumſtance, as to have decided (in the "art of poetry) the ſucceſs of pieces de-"fective in material points, and yet uni-"verſally admired on this account only. "He mentions as proofs of the truth of "this remark, the Cid, and the Death of "Pompey, both works of Corneille, but "greatly defective both in character and "œconomy. Theſe, he obſerves, are yet "preferred, contrary to the rules of the "drama, to others diſtinguiſhed by ſu-"perior manners, and a plan regularly "proſecuted.—Why?—Becauſe the ſtyle "and the ſentiment happily correſpond in "the firſt inſtance:—in the laſt, this af-"finity is not to be diſcovered. When "the heart therefore is touched by the "voice of nature, all the critical argu-"ments in the world can never per-"ſuade a man to with-hold his appro-

" bation *." This approbation every reader gives to a performance diſtinguiſhed by unaffected elegance of expreſſion, the natural effect of which is always to excite a very pleaſing ſenſation, even when we are inattentive to the cauſe.

Expreſſion, to whatever ſubject it may be applied, is ſaid to have elegance when certain natural graces are ſo happily diſpoſed in it, as to throw light on their objects without the glare of oſtentation; and when an eaſe, conſiſtent with dignity, is to be obſerved univerſally in the diſpoſition of words fitted to the various parts of a ſubject. It is difficult, if not impoſſible, in moſt caſes to give any clear and appropriated idea of this envied excellence, becauſe it is conſtituted by certain exquiſite ſtrokes, whoſe influence is felt by a reader of ſenſibility, though he cannot reſolve theſe into a regular ſyſtem, and account in a rational manner for the cauſe of his admiration. They are ſuch:

* See Du Bos' Reflex. Critique ſur la Poeſ. &c. tom. i. chap. 23.

Ut

Ut ſibi quivis
Speret idem, ſudet multum, fruſtraque laboret
Auſus idem. HOR.

Let us, however, try whether amidſt ſo many evaneſcent beauties ready to diſſolve like the ſhade of Patroclus into air as ſoon as we attempt to lay hold of them, we cannot catch a few of the moſt ſtriking in their paſſage, and hold theſe up as lights by whoſe aid we may diſtinguiſh real from affected elegance of expreſſion, in the various ſpheres of Compoſition.

In every juſt imitation of any original, propriety requires that the peculiar and diſtinguiſhing graces, as well as the great outlines of any figure, ſhould be tranſpoſed faithfully into a copy. When we deſcribe for inſtance, a landſcape, it is obvious that we are pleaſed in proportion as the rural ſcenery is ſo naturally diſplayed as to preſent objects in their native and ſimple decorations; as the *colours* of nature (if we may thus expreſs it) without being heightened are juſtly delineated; and as certain ſtriking features are fixed upon happily, and are ſet off with graces which give

give beauty to the piece. Elegance in this imitation, requires that nothing in the deſcription ſhould be overwrought; that no foreign ornaments ſhould be unnaturally forced in; that, in ſhort, the words ſhould imitate by a certain careleſs, but happy diſpoſition, the eaſy negligence of nature in the various arrangement and attitudes of her objects.

To the ſylvan lodge
They came, that like Pomona's arbour ſmiled
With flowrets deck'd and fragrant ſmells;—but Eve,
Undeck'd, ſave with herſelf, more lovely fair
Than wood-nymph, or the faireſt goddeſs feign'd,
Stood to entertain her heav'nly gueſt.——
Raiſed of graſſy turf
Their table was, and moſſy ſeats had round
And on her ample ſquare from ſide to ſide
All autumn piled, though ſpring and autumn here
Danced hand in hand. MILTON.

Nature herſelf appears to have held the pencil in painting this group of beautiful figures, in which no falſe heightening or improper imagery is admitted; but the imagination of the poet, wandering at eaſe over the bowers of Eden, adorns its deſcriptions with objects ſo animated as to

diſſipate

diſſipate the languor ariſing from inſipid uniformity, while propriety takes place in the diſpoſition as well as choice of theſe which the mind contemplates with peculiar ſatisfaction. The whole is indeed perfectly ſimple, but it muſt be acknowledged to be elegant ſimplicity.

We are not, however, always to ſuppoſe that a repreſentation of the external beauties of creation, in order to have the heightening of elegance, ought always to be enlivened either with figures that have real life, or even with an imitation of this circumſtance by perſonification. A deſcription may have great elegance in which the objects of ſtill life (as they are called) appear in a certain natural arrangement, when recommended by no other character than harmonious and appropriated diction. In the following combination of paſtoral beauties all is in the higheſt degree pictureſque, though nothing is perſonified, and the ſtructure of the period is ſuch as to improve the effect of a moſt elegant aſſemblage.

At ſecura quies, & neſcia fallere vita
Dives opum variarum; at latis otia fundis,
Speluncæ vivique lacus: at frigida tempe,
Mugituſque boum, molleſque ſub arbore ſomni
Non abſunt. VIR.

Expreſſion acquires ineffable elegance upon ſome occaſions from a vein of imagery happily blended with the ſentiment, and coaleſcing with it in ſuch a manner as that both muſt ſuffer by the ſlighteſt tranſpoſition. Such is the character of Sappho, drawn by Horace:

Spirat adhuc Amor,
Vivuntque commiſſi calores
Æoliæ fidibus puellæ. Ode ix. lib. 4.

The image wrought here ſo exquiſitely into the character, reminds us of the delicate ſhading in the moſt maſterly drawings, which ſeems to die away inſenſibly into air, or fades by imperceptible degrees into the ground-colour of the piece. By attempting to disjoin theſe, we encroach upon ſomething which we meant to have preſerved, and are ſenſible that the piece muſt be disfigured by the moſt minute alteration.

In

In our remarks on elegant Compoſition, we have endeavoured to ſhow in what caſes this characteriſtic excellence diſtinguiſheth the ſentiment of a performance; and we have pointed out examples in which it is conſpicuous in the thought and expreſſion of a work mutually reflecting light on each other. In ſome inſtances however, thoughts that have no peculiar merit of themſelves, and which in an ordinary dreſs would have been wholly overlooked, become ſignificant by being expreſſed with a certain natural eaſe which gives an air of unaffected elegance to the whole. In this branch of the character here treated, we muſt allow Anacreon to be wholly peculiar and inimitable. When this writer tells us, that "he cares not for "Gyges the king of the Sardians; that "gold has no attractions for him; that "he envies not tyrants; and that his de-"ſire is to pour unguents on his body, "to crown himſelf with roſes, and let to-"morrow provide for itſelf;"—ſuch circumſtances in a tranſlation may appear foreign and impertinent. Yet in the original

ginal that "curioſa felicitas dicendi," that happy choice and diſpoſition of words, which it is a vain attempt to imitate, confers graces on theſe ſlight remarks which render them the objects of elegant entertainment *.

In

---

* Ου μοι μελει Γυγαο,
Του Σαρδεων ανακτος·
Ουθ' αιρεει με χρυσος,
Ουδε φθονω Τυραννοις.
Εμοι μελει μυροισι
Κατα βρεχειν υπηνην.
Εμοι μελει ῥοδοισι
Καταςεφειν καρηνα.
Ου Σημερου μελει μοι, &c. ANAK. εις Εαυτ.

The character of this bard the reader will find drawn more particularly, and the elegance of his compoſition exemplified, in the Eſſay on Lyric Poetry, p. 55, &c.—The ingenious Abbé du Bos has preſerved a beautiful ode in his Reflections on Poetry and Painting, in which a thought, as ſimple as any of the preceding, is rendered ſtriking by the graces of elegant expreſſion. It is a piece of the Abbot Chaulieu, whoſe purport is only this, that he would die in the place where he was born. We admire, however, the colour with which it is ornamented.——

Fontenay lieux delicieux
Ou je vis d'abord la lumiere,
Bientot au tout de ma carriere
Chez toi je joindrai mes ayeux.

Muſes,

In the ſphere of Compoſition, as no excellence whatever is more univerſally envied and admired than that of elegance, ſo there is none in every ſenſe more difficult to be acquired. This is obvious, from the bad ſucceſs of many attempts that have been made to imitate writings diſtinguiſhed by this character. Among the imitators of the manner of Anacreon, few have ever been able to catch the ſpirit, and transfuſe the graces of this original *. Plato in the ſame manner ſtands unrivalled among Greek philoſophers, and Horace and Petronius among the Romans †. A man

---

Muſes, qui dans ce lieu champetre
Avec ſoin me f'ites nourir,
Beaux arbres qui m'avez vu naitre,
Bientot vous me verrez mourir.—
Du Bos. c. xxxiii. v. 1.

* Prior, among our own writers, ſeems to have approached neareſt to this original. Some of his pieces are happily Anacreontic. Fontaine is an inimitable original himſelf.

† Theſe authors (the laſt particularly) are ſelected here, becauſe elegance is their principal characteriſtic. Cicero has this in common with many other excellencies, but upon the whole, the "teres atque rotundus" (as Horace calls it) characteriſeth his copious expreſſion

man muſt have received from nature a power of perceiving certain exquiſite connections, in order to be denominated elegant in the ſenſe aſſigned here to that epithet, and a facility of ſelecting and of applying thoſe graces to deſcription or ſentiment, that are juſt the moſt ſuitable and becoming. We muſt make a diſtinction however betwixt theſe powers, the one of which regards perception, and the other execution. Though neither are conferred univerſally, yet many perſons are enabled by the former to obſerve and to feel the effect ariſing from an aſſemblage of objects elegantly decorated, who yet would fail in an attempt to form ſo beautiful a combination; becauſe with ſenſibility to reliſh theſe beauties when preſented to the mind, its powers may be inadequate to the taſk of creating them. That energy of thought by which the

---

expreſſion more remarkably than any other ſignature, and in ſtudying a model of elegance it is proper to have that preſented to us which offers principally to our view the various forms of this diſtinguiſhing quality.

moſt

moſt appropriated colouring is immediately applied to ideas, and the moſt ſuitable expreſſion is ſelected with eaſe to render theſe univerſally agreeable, is wholly diſtinct from the power by which we judge of a juſt or inadequate combination; the laſt of which extends no further than to enable the perſon poſſeſſed of it to avoid groſs defects in Compoſition, and to be characteriſed upon the whole by negative deſcription.

To deny (whatever truths may be in theſe obſervations) that an elegant taſte may be improved, if not created, and its influence rendered conſpicuous in execution as well as theory, by the ſtudy of unexceptionable models, would be as abſurd as to deny that the dignity of a good mien may be heightened by having frequented the beſt company; or that the expreſſion of an amiable countenance becomes more attractive by a happy and graceful diſpoſition of ſuitable ornaments. Though, therefore, we cannot ſuppoſe in the preſent caſe, that he whoſe natural powers are deficient, will by any proceſs

of obſervation be enabled to execute with maſtery, and to throw out thoſe graces that give elegance to Compoſition; yet, by having attended to the effect of theſe in the writings of others, he may avoid the oppoſite extreme in his own; and in the conduct of philoſophical deduction, while the arguments may carry conviction to the underſtanding, the ſtyle of an author's compoſition will thus be often entertaining, and at no time vulgar or diſguſting.

It ought always to be obſerved, that an *expreſſion* unexceptionably accurate, if not really elegant, may be obtained by imitation and attention much more eaſily than the means by which *ſentiments* acquire this character. The art of turning a period with harmony may be learned with more facility than that of expoſing a thought in the happieſt point of view, or of rendering a ſeries of ſentiments agreeable by a certain juſt and beautiful diſpoſition, becauſe the firſt of theſe depends principally upon an harmonious ear; whereas the laſt requires taſte, diſcernment, and ſenſibility.

As

As to elegance likewiſe, conſidered ſimply with regard to expreſſion, we muſt diſtinguiſh that kind of it which ariſeth from a certain pleaſing arrangement of words, from that which is obſerved in the invention, beauty, and diſpoſition of images, improving every object by an appropriated colour, and adding to a piece the laſt exquiſite ſhading that renders it complete. The attainment of the firſt of theſe purpoſes depends in a great meaſure upon the choice of proper models for imitation; principally upon having made a juſt ſelection in very early life. There is (as the ſtudy of works compoſed at ages remote from each other will convince any man) a certain mode of expreſſion, by which contemporary writers in one (even claſſical) age may be diſtinguiſhed as obviouſly from thoſe who at a conſiderable diſtance have either preceded or come after them, as that by which two flouriſhing at the ſame time are known and diſcriminated. The difference indeed becomes more ſtrikingly conſpicuous, when we compare a polite with a barbarous age,

than when we judge from any intermediate periods*; becauſe this preſents to us ſuch a proſpect as the ſame face ſeen in youth and in old age. Time, which at a middle period would have been obſerved to alter without impairing its ex-

* Longinus, who lived in the reign of Aurelian and Zenobia, compared with the beſt writers of the age of Auguſtus, is indeed a remarkable exception to the rule here laid down; but not only are we to conſider this as an inſtance almoſt wholly ſingular, but we may aſcribe it either to that native ſublimity of imagination, which (as we ſhall ſhow afterwards) is the character of all others leaſt apt to be impaired by any external circumſtances; or to an happy ſelection of models in the firſt ſtage of life, which Longinus might have been prompted to make by his own exquiſite diſcernment. Both theſe cauſes probably concurred to prevent this eminent critic from being tainted by the taſte of an age conſiderably degenerated. The firſt mentioned is evidently conſpicuous in the grandeur of his own ſentiments, and in that keen ſenſibility with which he appears to have entered into thoſe of others:—the laſt is obvious from the authorities quoted by him from the beſt ſtandards handed down by antiquity. A writer converſant wholly with theſe, and fitted at the ſame time by nature to form great conceptions, we might have pronounced ſecure againſt the contagion of falſe taſte, and qualified to tranſpoſe by imitation thoſe excellencies into his work, whoſe beauty he at the ſame time felt and developed. Milton is an example of this kind.

preſſion,

preſſion, will be ſeen in this laſt ſtage to have made a remarkable change upon the whole: but the ſteps that have led to this are real though imperceptible, and at any conſiderable interval their effect would have been obvious.

We muſt, after all, conſider it at firſt view as ſomewhat extraordinary that men, living at a period however remote, who might have imitated the perfect models of the Auguſtan age handed down as patterns, ſhould yet have adopted the barbarous and unintelligible jargon of their own. But this conduct ought principally to be aſcribed to the firſt bias imprinted on the mind, and to the writings with which it was converſant. An individual, how ingenious ſoever, and diſtinguiſhed by nature with elegant taſte, yet forming himſelf at firſt upon models leſs perfect than theſe already mentioned, or carried away by the prevailing character of his age and country, gradually falls into a manner which theſe circumſtances contribute ſo neceſſarily to finiſh, different perhaps from that

which nature, unwarped by faſhion and prejudice, would have taught him to aſſume. Elegant Compoſition, conſidered as perfected by the union of eaſy language, and of images diſpoſed with grace and propriety, cannot be obtained when the mind is ſtraitened in any exertion; and is impaired indiſpenſably by the accidents here enumerated. In order therefore, as much as poſſible, to prevent their effects, the works that are firſt peruſed by a man of genius at any time whatever, ought to be ſuch as are univerſally acknowledged to be characteriſed principally by the graces that conſtitute elegance. A *ſublime* imagination will preſerve its original bias, and will throw out ſtrong examples of it, in whatever age the man poſſeſſed of this faculty may live, and by whatever circumſtances (a total want of education excepted) its influence may be counteracted. This is one of thoſe vivid and indelible characters ſo forcibly ſtamped upon the mind, as to reſiſt the power of cauſes by which weaker ones are eradicated.

dicated *. The ſame remark may be made of this faculty when principally characteriſed

* Of the truth of this obſervation, the celebrated Oſſian affords a diſtinguiſhed example among our own countrymen, as Dante, Camoens, and Arioſto, (though flouriſhing indeed at later periods) exhibit among foreigners. The ſpirit of Lada, and ghoſts of the Caledonian bard; the machinery introduced by Dante in order to give poignancy to his exquiſite ſatire; the Adamaſter of the Portugueſe, introduced with ſuch grand and noble circumſtences; and the various imagery thrown out with great ſublimity of imagination, though without much regularity by the Italian;—theſe furniſh inconteſtible proofs that this great character of Compoſition is to be met with univerſally in the works of diſtinguiſhed geniuſes, in whatever age they may happen to live. It is true that Arioſto lived in the ſixteenth century, at the time of the reſurrection of letters: but as learning was then only beginning to emerge from the night of Gothic ignorance, neither his work, nor that of Camoens is diſtinguiſhed by the graces of elegant Compoſition as a characteriſtical excellence. Examples of ſublime, and of pathetic deſcription are to be met with univerſally in the writings of both. Oſſian, in the ſame manner diſtinguiſhed by grandeur, luxury, and exuberance of imagination, was converſant with no objects, and beheld no manners from which he might be enabled to obtain the graces that conſtitute elegance. The language in which he wrote, (muſical as it is ſaid to be), muſt have been unequal to the expreſſion of elegant ſentiment, (ſuch as we have had occaſion to exemplify) and ſome ſtrokes

teriſed by ſtrength and energy. Theſe laſt are ſo far from requiring a claſſical age to call them out into action, that we obſerve them often moſt conſpicuouſly predominant in times of darkneſs and barbariſm. It is otherwiſe with the character of elegance, which marks upon all occaſions the productions of improved ſociety, and is never the capital ingredient of a performance either compoſed by an illiterate author, or the work of a rude and barbarous age *. In order, therefore, to acquire

---

of deſcription, finiſhed with great delicacy, ſcattered through his writings, and through the writings of others in ſimilar circumſtances, are like flowers riſing in a wilderneſs, whoſe beauty might have been highly improved by a cultivated ſoil, an happy expoſure, and a favourable ſun.

* In the ſavage ſtate we may expect to meet with ſtrength and vigour of thought, as well as of expreſſion, particularly in the detail of tranſactions, becauſe the rougher paſſions are in ſuch a ſtate taught to exert themſelves with a certain deſperate ferocity, whoſe influence appears in Compoſition. Accordingly, in the works of the *bards* of theſe times (the criteria by which we can beſt judge of the taſte and manners of an age) ſtrength of expreſſion, and of colouring, is a ſignature more univerſally to be diſcerned, than in the more finiſhed productions of our own. The ingenious

acquire this character, or at leaſt to improve as highly as poſſible the propenſity of nature, a man of genius, after having gained a juſt and appropriated idea of elegance, as relating both to expreſſion and ſentiment, ſhould endeavour, by having attended particularly to every appearance of this excellence, and by attempts to imitate it in whatever manner it is apprehended, to carry his general obſervations into practice, and transfuſe a portion of that ſpirit into his own Compoſition, whoſe influence he hath marked ſo juſtly in that of others.

---

nious Dr. Blair has illuſtrated this remark in his Diſſertion on the Poems of Oſſian, by tranſlating a Gothic poem preſerved by Olaus Wormius, in his work De Literatura Runica. "This (ſays our critic, after "having preſented us with the work) is ſuch poetry "as we might expect from a barbarous nation.—It "breathes a moſt ferocious ſpirit. It is wild, harſh, "and irregular; but at the ſame time *animated and* "*ſtrong*; the ſtyle in the original highly-figured and "metaphorical." Blair's Diſſertat. quar. edit. p. 11. The ſame nervous expreſſion diſtinguiſheth the performances of Chaucer among our own countrymen; and for the reaſon already adduced, will generally be moſt conſpicuous in the productions of a barbarous age.

Let

Let it be obſerved, that we deſire as little in the preſent, as in any other caſe, a man of genius to bind himſelf down to a ſervile imitation of any model, however beautiful. Amidſt all the objects that art or experience can aſſemble to promote intellectual culture, the *original expreſſion* of the mind, like the original ſtamina of the body, remains unalterable, though this expreſſion will be ſet off by theſe to the higheſt advantage, when neither impaired by timidity, nor diſtorted by affectation. An herb withering in the ſhade, and expanding its leaves, or exhaling fragrance in the ſun, preſents an image correſponding to the preſent ſubject. In both ſituations a diſcerning eye will trace the ſame lineaments, however different their external appearance. But in one caſe the foliage is ſhrunk and contracted;—in the other its colours are heightened, its foliage opened, and its beauty greatly improved by expoſure and cultivation.

As a principal means to aſſiſt us in the art of rendering Compoſition truly elegant, we muſt endeavour to guard againſt errors

that

that carry the appearance of this character ſo plauſibly as not to be eaſily known from reality. Thus an attempt to introduce *brilliance* into Compoſition by a certain quaintneſs of epithet, and artful diſpoſition of pretty images ſubſtituted with no propriety or ſignificance, paſſeth upon many readers for elegance, though really incompatible with it at the bottom. An imagination always looking out for metaphors, and applying theſe without proper direction or diſcernment, is uſually the cauſe of this falſe delicacy. When Ovid makes Laodamia ſay to Proteſilaus, who was engaged in the Trojan war,

Timeo: quotieſque ſubit miſerabile bellum
More nivis lachrymæ ſole madentis eunt.
Oft as the wars tremenduous ſcenes appear,
Like ſnow diſſolving, drops th' unceaſing tear.

The ſtrained alluſion employed here, has ſome appearance of elegance at firſt view, but taſte rejects it as a prettineſs indicating at leaſt want of attention, if not a defect of diſcernment.

We ought likewiſe to diſtinguiſh elegance, properly ſo called, from purity or chaſtity of language; the latter of which regards

regards the conſtruction and propriety of words, while the former relates to the graceful and harmonious ſtructure of periods. By the harmony of periods is not meant a long ſtring of words rounded in an elaborate and uniform manner. This end is obtained by a natural and judicious variety, adapted properly to the different branches of a ſubject, and to that particular kind of ſentiment into which an author may happen to fall. It would be an eaſy matter to enlarge this part of our work, by examples of falſe delicacy in the ſtyle of Compoſition; but as we have already conſidered in what manner elegance may be diſcovered, either in the ſentiment or expreſſion of a performance, and have attempted to confirm, by ſuitable illuſtrations, our remarks on the means that conſtitute this character, a further enlargement on the defects of writers, otherwiſe eminent, would be at the ſame time diſagreeable and unneceſſary.

We ſhall therefore diſmiſs this ſubject when we have juſt obſerved in general, that however certain authors, from a conſciouſneſs

ſciouſneſs perhaps of their own inability to obtain the graces that conſtitute elegance in the art here treated of, may affect to deſpiſe it, yet it is by theſe that the human heart is moſt powerfully captivated, and conſequently the end of inſtruction moſt effectually accompliſhed. By a conduct of this kind, a man diſcovers his own want of underſtanding, which would ſuggeſt to him that a man, in whatever point of view it may appear to himſelf, acquires ſignificance in proportion as the purpoſes are important to which it may be rendered ſubſervient. The politeneſs and fluency of Petronius, and the ſimple elegance of Anacreon, make vices and trifles the ſources of entertainment, while a writer who poſſeſſed a vein of ſterling wit, but without the power of ſetting it off with this character of Compoſition, is cenſured with reaſon, and is peruſed with diſguſt.

—— Noſtri proavi *Plautinos* & numeros, et
Laudavere ſales, nimium patienter utrumque,
Ne dicam ſtulte mirati ; ſi modo ego & vos
Scimus inurbanum lepido ſeponere dicto,
Legitimumque ſonum digitis callemus & aure.

SECTION V.

Of ſublime Compoſition.

THE characters of juſt Compoſition, whoſe nature and uſe we have attempted to explain in the preceding ſections, belong (as we have ſeen) indiſcriminately to every branch of the art without exception; and the execution of any performance muſt be judged deficient in which theſe are not united. Simplicity, perſpicuity, and elegance, we are therefore to conſider as criteria at the ſame time univerſal and indiſpenſable, in which reſpects they differ from the ingredient of ſublimity, whoſe influence extends principally to certain known ſpecies, and when exerted in others is a noble but unexpected decoration, whoſe preſence excites high approbation, though its abſence might have been marked without cenſure. There is likewiſe another circumſtance peculiar to the grand in Compoſition, conſidered as a character of the art by which it is diſtinguiſhed from thoſe that have

formerly

formerly been enumerated. It is, that while theſe may characteriſe the *expreſſion* of a performance when there is nothing ſtriking or uncommon in the *ſentiment*; and though on that account we may examine ſeparately the thought or deſcription, and the language that conveys it, yet in the article of ſublimity theſe muſt always be contemplated together, and in order to conſtitute this excellence, there muſt be an invariable co-operation of both. A work in which, upon the whole, there is nothing either new or extraordinary, when the thoughts are examined apart, may yet be diſtinguiſhed by ſimplicity, perſpicuity, and even elegance of diction:—but an exalted idea naturally ſwells out the language to adequate emphaſis *; and when

* Longinus, in his enumeration of the ſources from which ſublimity is derived, conſiders expreſſion "as a kind of common ſtratum, or foundation for "this magnificent ſuperſtructure, which however "may be deficient ſo as to render the whole of no "effect." Περι Υψ. τμημ. H. But this aſſertion upon ſtrict examination, will not perhaps appear to have been cloſely inveſtigated. For it is here ſuppoſed

when the latter (however ſounding) is unſupported by majeſty of ſentiment, we denominate it timid and bombaſt.

The

---

poſed, that to a mind poſſeſſing all the ſources of ſublimity, a power may be denied of clothing its ideas in ſignificant language. Προυποκειμενης ωσπερ εδαφους τινος κοινου ταις ωεντε ταυταις ιδεαις της ευ τω λεγειν δυναμεως, ης ολως χωρις ουδεν. Ubi ſup. But this is a caſe rarely, if ever, to be met with. An imagination filled with a great idea, will adopt an expreſſion as naturally appropriated to the object, as a man ſtimulated by the impulſe of any paſſion finds words expreſſive of his feeling. In the firſt inſtance the mind may labour with the greatneſs of ſome vaſt conception, and may find it difficult to ſelect words proportioned to its ſublimity; but ſtill the thought will give ſtrong ſignificance to ſuch as are fixed upon, which, whether adapted or not with perfect propriety, will receive elevation from the ſentiment. It is not, therefore, true, that when an idea truly ſublime is formed, and diſtinctly comprehended by the mind, expreſſion can be defective, ſo as to render it of no effect. But admitting that a perſon, capable of thinking in this manner, ſhould be able to make uſe of no words but ſuch as are mean and wholly diſproportioned, it is obvious, that notwithſtanding this inconvenience by which an alteration would be made on the external appearance of an object, its intrinſic value would continue to be the ſame; and though ſublimity is imperfect when there ceaſeth to be a proportion betwixt the thought and expreſſion; yet the former, far from being rendered

The province of the ſublime in every kind of Compoſition is pre-occupied by a critic, whoſe noble work on this ſubject is ſo univerſally peruſed and admired by readers of the ſmalleſt claſſical knowledge, that an enlargement on this ſubject is in a great meaſure ſuperſeded by it. As a repetition, therefore, of the ſentiments of Longinus would be uſeleſs on the preſent occaſion, we ſhall endeavour (as every ſubject admits of being viewed in different lights) to avoid, as much as poſſible, an interference with this admired author, which could anſwer no important purpoſe either of entertainment or inſtruction. We

---

dered of no uſe by ſuch an omiſſion, would ſtill produce an effect upon a mind able thoroughly to comprehend it, adequate to its excellence, and to the propriety of its diſpoſition. But ſuch an inequality when the mind is agitated by a ruling paſſion, and far more when imagination is filled with an exalted idea, we have no reaſon to expect. An object viewed indiſtinctly, cannot be clearly repreſented; but when it is at once magnificent and turned full to the faculty that ſurveys it, ſuitable words will occur as readily to delineate it with maſtery, as the proper tools will be applied by a ſkilful artiſan to give proportion, grace, and conſiſtency to his work.

ſhall, therefore, ſeparately conſider by what circumſtances ſublimity is conſtituted in the various field of the extenſive art here examined, and ſhow in what manner the true may be diſtinguiſhed from the falſe ſublime:—the moſt proper method of improving upon the foundation laid by nature for the acquiſition of this great quality will fall next to be examined, as neceſſary to render our view of it complete as a character of Compoſition.

I. The grand in this art, therefore, ariſeth from the union of bold and elevated ſentiments, with grace and dignity of expreſſion. Of theſe, when traced to their original, imagination is in moſt caſes the common parent. To the obſervations formerly made on the employments aſſigned to this power in the departments of ſcience, it is here only neceſſary to add, that we ought to diſtinguiſh betwixt *one idea* greatly conceived, or *one circumſtance* heightened by exquiſite colouring; and thoughts united together in a comprehenſive plan, which may be deemed *great* from the variety and complicated nature

of

of its materials. We never apply the epithet *ſublime* to a production of this laſt kind, whoſe conduct is referred to the underſtanding; and we denominate it *great*, in the ſame ſenſe as we would apply this phraſe to an empire conſpicuous not for the grandeur of its palaces, but merely for the extent and variety of its provincial territories. A comprehenſive ſcheme, therefore, whoſe parts are well adjuſted, and obſervations that lay open the nature of a ſubject, indicate the compaſs and depth of an author's underſtanding:—but one object truly noble, or even one maſterly ſtroke in the delineation of a figure, diſcovers a ſublime imagination; and a congenial ſpirit is never at a loſs, both to mark this character when it occurs, and to refer it when diſcovered to its proper original.

We do not here mean by aſcribing the ſublime to the power of invention, either to contemplate this as acting independently of the reaſoning faculty in the preſent office, or to repreſent ſublimity as principally conſtituted by the deſcription of objects ſubmitted to the cogniſance of

ſenſe. The range of fancy is immenſe; and whatever excites *admiration* falls within her province. A naked rock, a ſtupendous precipice, a ruined tower, and other external ſcenes of a ſimilar kind, are preſented in all the majeſty of deſcription by her pencil. But her influence extends no leſs to immaterial ſubjects, or rather theſe when coloured, imperſonated, and preſented vividly to the eye, form the higheſt and moſt conſpicuous characters on which her creative energy is exerted. By the power therefore of imagination, innumerable themes, both in nature and art, are rendered ſubjects of admiration;—by the ſuperintendence of reaſon, her flights are prevented from being extravagant.

There is, in deſcription of all kinds whatever, a certain juſtneſs of colour (if we may thus expreſs it), a certain relation betwixt the perſon or thing deſcribed, and the natural ideas formed of it by mankind in general, without which no object can be denominated ſublime, or, indeed, be diſtinguiſhed by any determinate character.

When

When Milton (the moſt ſublime of poets) repreſents the Deity as "enthroned *above all height*;" when in the ſame ſpirit of exalted deſcription *his ſkirts* appear "*dark* with *exceſſive bright*;" we are led to admire theſe daring and aſtoniſhing circumſtances as the reſult of regulated, inſtead of cenſuring them as the ebullitions of extravagant imagination, by recollecting that both are mentioned of the *only Being* to whom they can be applied with propriety; the firſt filling the mind with the moſt exalted idea of his ineffable majeſty; the laſt, by one of the happieſt and moſt pictureſque images ever ſeized by human imagination, repreſenting the effulgence of ſplendor that ſurrounds him. Such circumſtances as theſe, appropriated to any other object within the whole compaſs of nature, would be viewed as indications of an inventive faculty, great indeed, but uncontrouled in its operations, and unaided by that power which maintains conſiſtency in every form delineated by the mind.

Here then we obſerve the provinces of the two ſuperior faculties in producing

ſublime Compoſition placed in diſtinct points of view. As the former, therefore, conceives the original idea, ſo when this has been reviewed by the underſtanding with approbation, it ſuggeſts an expreſſion adapted to convey it with ſuitable energy. Hence it happens, that though we often meet with flimſy thoughts clothed in pompous language, and rendered by this diſproportion conſpicuouſly ridiculous, yet we rarely, or never obſerve a thought, conceived with genuine ſublimity, to be diſfigured by mean and inexpreſſive epithets. The ſame intellectual power that riſes to elevated ſentiment, preſcribes likewiſe an expreſſion adequate to its majeſty; as well as the colouring, or imagery, calculated to make the moſt vivid impreſſion. Contemplated as the parent of the marvellous and admirable, the influence of imagination is by no means to be limited to the invention of what is grand in ſentiment, or to the perſonification of what is inanimate in nature. Theſe are, indeed, the themes that require her moſt ſtrenuous exertion. But when we trace to this

power

power likewiſe, as to its original ſource, the ſelection of well appropriated language, it ought to be remembered, that we aſcribe no greater effect to it than the paſſions, taken ſeparately, ſhare with it in common; each of which dictates a diſtinct expreſſion, in proportion as it is gentle, or forcible; languid, or impetuous; by which, as an invariable criteria, we form an eſtimate of the character or temper.

We muſt not ſuppoſe, however, that this happy coalition of noble objects and ſignificant diction, whoſe concurrence is neceſſary to give ſublimity either to ſentiment or deſcription, can be perfectly obtained, even by the united effort of both intellectual powers, while unimproved by ſtudy, experience, and practice. Art, in order to complete this character, muſt improve upon the foundation of nature; and an author ought to be ſo well acquainted with the manner of forming this combination in particular inſtances, as that his own practice may be regulated by the theory he hath gained from experience. This circumſtance it is, that renders the

true ſublime ſo uncommon, and ſo difficult an attainment. The irregular grandeur of a Gothic edifice, at the ſame time that it excites admiration, reminds us of an uncultivated age, and of a people yet unacquainted with the effects ariſing from a graceful aſſemblage of correſponding parts. There is a wildneſs here which pleaſeth, as an imitation of nature in ſome of her rudeſt productions; but we behold with equal aſtoniſhment, and with higher approbation, a performance in this kind, finiſhed by the exquiſite ſtrokes of an art concealed from our inſpection, and wrought (though we perceive not the means) from models in which the union of grandeur and regularity forms the neareſt approach to perfection.

II. Theſe obſervations on the ſublime in Compoſition, will be elucidated when we conſider the various means by which this great character of the art is conſtituted. A little reflection will convince us, that ſublimity ariſeth from combinations, ſo diverſified both of language and ſentiment in the various ſpheres of Compoſition, as

may

may indeed be diſcovered by taſte, but cannot be reduced into a regular ſyſtem. Some of theſe, however, it may here be proper to point out and exemplify, as well as to ſhow in what manner the *true* may be diſtinguiſhed from the *falſe* ſublime, in order at the ſame time to direct a mind ambitious of acquiring this excellence, to the path that leads to it; and by detecting, from compariſon, the errors of falſe repreſentation to render theſe the objects of its avoidance.

A thought then ſometimes becomes ſublime, when the imagination ſeizing oppoſite circumſtances, two ſubjects for inſtance, in the extremes of magnitude and littleneſs, of elevation and meanneſs, placeth the former in an exalted, and both in a pictureſque point of view, by bringing theſe immediately into compariſon. "I "believe (ſays Socrates, in the celebrated "dialogue formerly referred to) that this "earth is an immenſe body; and to a ſu- "perior Being (as he afterwards deſcribes "one) looking down upon it, we, who "inhabit the countries that lie betwixt

"the

" the river Phaſis, and the Pillars of Her-
" cules, appear ſcattered on the coaſts of
" the Mediterranean like ants or frogs, as
" we behold them gathered in parcels
" about a lake *." There is ſomething noble in the idea exhibited here of the world in general; and the contemptible figure which many powerful nations make, when compared with it, raiſes our conceptions of its extent and magnificence as a work worthy of its Divine Architect. The Being who looks on, likewiſe, we are diſpoſed to admire as ſublime aud glorious, in the ſame proportion as thoſe whom he contemplates are deemed to be little and inſignificant. A beauty of the ſame kind, but incomparably more exalted, characteriſeth the following paſſage in the work of a celebrated modern poet, where the *Deity*, by one ſtroke of his maſterly pencil,

* Ετι τοινυν εφη, ωαμμεγα τι ειναι αυτο, και ημας οικειν τας μεχρις Ηρακλειων ςηλων απο Φασιδος εν σμικρω τινι μοριω ωσπερ ωερι τελμα μυρμηκας, η βατραχους ωερι την θαλατταν οικαντας. Και αλλους αλλοθι ωολλας εν ωολλοις τοιουτοις τοποις οικειν. ΦΑΙΔ. τμημ. νη.

appears

appears ineffably glorious from compariſon with the moſt ſplendid of his works.

O THOU whoſe *word* from ſolid darkneſs ſtruck
That *ſpark* the SUN *.

This glorious orb of light, repreſented as a ſpark ſtruck out at once by the word of the Deity, placeth the Creator in a point of view inconceivably more ſublime than could have been attained by any detail, however animated, of his perfections. Viewed in oppoſition to the higheſt of his viſible works, which diſſolves before him into nothing, the mind is filled by this circumſtance with an idea as worthy of its original as it is poſſible for it to conceive.

As a great object is thus in general ſet off to the higheſt advantage by being placed in oppoſition to an inferior one, diſtinguiſhed by ſome real or ſuppoſed reſemblance, ſo in other caſes, when original, to be placed in a ſublime light is leſs dignified, and the imagination of the painter muſt ſupply its deficiencies by colour and

* Night Thoughts, p. 2.

expreſ-

expreſſion; it is yet rendered exalted by a happy diſpoſition of ſome preceding circumſtances, without which we ſhould have perceived in it nothing extraordinary.—Thus when Hector is going to part from Andromache, after many tender and natural expoſtulations, the poet ſays,

Ως αρα φωνησας κορυθ' ειλετο φαιδιμος Εκτωρ
Ιππουριν.

Thus having ſaid, the glorious chief reſumes
His towering helmet, black with ſhading plumes.
POPE.

But what (it may be aſked) is there great in this deſcription of the Trojan heroe?—We muſt look for this purpoſe into the preceding interview, in which we ſee this illuſtrious prince taking a laſt and melancholy farewel of his wife and child, in a ſcene of mingled tenderneſs and magnanimity; where, after having given a looſe to the ſofter paſſions, and appeared the tender father and affectionate huſband, he reaſſumes the character of the hero, and, expreſſing his ambition to be foremoſt in defending his country, puts on his helmet, and goes, with unſhaken fortitude, to the battle.

This

This happy diſpoſition of circumſtances as it gives dignity to an incident, otherwiſe inconſiderable in deſcription, ſo in narration it renders a character truely ſublime; and ſentiments, otherwiſe merely philoſophical, the peculiar objects of admiration.—Socrates, reaſoning againſt the fear of death, and coolly running the compariſon betwixt what we enjoy in this life, and what we conceive of the next, appears merely in the light of an excellent philoſopher. But Socrates, juſt condemned to death himſelf, by a ſentence flagrantly unjuſt, entering calmly into the examination of this queſtion before his judges *, without expreſſing fear, anger, indignation, or reſentment †; this great man

* After having ſaid that the friendly ſpirit which prevented him from purſuing upon other occaſions what was unfit, had given him no warning upon the preſent, he concludes, that this being looked upon his death as an happy event. This he proves by a philoſophical inveſtigation.

† Και εγωγε τοις καταψηφισαμενοις μη και τοις κατηγοροις ου πανυ χαλεπαινω. καιτοι ου ταυτη τη διανοια κατεψηφιζοντο μου και κατηγορουν. ΑΠΟΛ. ΣΩΚ. τμημ. λγ.

endea-

endeavouring to prepare his accuſers for meeting death with intrepidity when their own turn ſhould come *, and requeſting of them to puniſh his children after him, ſhould theſe prefer opulence to virtue †, appears in a light almoſt divine. Every ſentiment is ineffably dignified by the circumſtances in which he is placed; the whole action is ſublime in the higheſt degree, and the man appears exalted above the common level of humanity. It is a conduct of this kind upon which not only men, but even the gods themſelves, were ſuppoſed to look down with admiration.

A deſcription (particularly in the higher branches of poetry, where a ſeries of actions are related) becomes wonderfully ſublime by the introduction of a juſt and

---

* Αλλα και υμας χρη ω ανδρες δεκαζαι ευελπιδας ειναι ωρος τον θανατον, και εν τε τουτο διανοεισθαι αληθες, οτι ουκ εζι ανδρι αγαθω κακον ουδεν, ουτε ζωντι, ουτε τελευτησαντι. Id. ibid.

† Τους υιεις μου επειδαν εβησωσι, τιμωρησασθε ω ανδρες ταυτα ταυτα λυπουντας απερ εγω υμας ελυπουν εαν υμιν δοκωσιν η χρηματων η αλλου του ωροτερον επιμελεισθαι η αρετης. Ibid.

adequate

adequate illuſtration *. This method of obtaining ſublimity is put in practice univerſally by all writers who dwell on great and magnificent objects. It is, however, as difficult to reach this ſummit of excellence by the preſent, as by any means whatever, becauſe the image that conveys to us ſuch an object ought to be equal at leaſt, if not in ſome reſpects ſuperior to its original. The underſtanding of an author likewiſe, never appears more conſpicuous in this high ſphere of Compoſition, than when it directs him upon ſome occaſions to avoid compariſon of what kind ſoever, as tending to depreciate, rather than exalt that to which no illuſtration can be adequate †.

That

" On s' explique (ſays a French critic with propriety on the ſubject of illuſtration) aſſez ordinairement, par des comparaiſons & l'on s'en ſert pour mieux faire concevoir ce que l'on propoſe, & pour en donner une juſte idée. Elles ont deux qualitez eſſentielles; la premiere eſt, que la choſe que l'on y employe ſoit plus connue, & plus aiſee a concevoir que celle que l'on veut faire connoitre par ſon moyen: & la ſeconde eſt qu' il y ait un juſte rapport entre l'un & l'autre." Boſſu du Poeme Epique, liv. vi. chap. 3.

† What another critic of the ſame nation with the former, obſerves of the poetic fable, may be applied here

That the image which is applied to ſet a great action or perſonage before our eyes ought to exceed, rather than fall below its original, will be acknowledged, if we reflect that the narration of any tranſaction, how animated ſoever, cannot affect us ſo ſtrongly as if we had either been eye witneſſes of, or perſonally intereſted in the event; and in order as much as poſſible to compenſate for this deficiency, images are ſelected that impreſs a *vivid* idea of their original patterns upon the mind, and by exceeding the truth, excite in us nearly the ſame ſenſations with which we ſhould have beheld it. By following out this train of obſervation, we may diſcover the origin of poetic licence (as it is called), and contemplate it in a much more rational and philoſophical light

---

here with perfect propriety to its images. "La fable doit encore avoir deux qualitez pour eſtre parfaite: elle doit eſtre merveilleux, & elle doit eſtre vrai ſembable. Elle devient digne d'admiration par la premiere, & elle devient digne de creance par la ſeconde. Quelque merveilleuſe que ſoit la fable elle ne ſera point d'effet ſi elle n'eſt vraiſembable, &c." Rap. Reflex. ſur la Poetique Oeuv. tom. ii. p. 103.

than

than is uſually done. That dignified perſonages, great actions, momentous revolutions, or aſtoniſhing events, might be diſplayed for the purpoſe of exciting a virtuous emulation, and of arreſting attention by ſtrokes of maſterly eloquence, images are made uſe of whoſe tendency principally is to exalt the imagination, or to awaken the paſſions proper to be wrought on. While we are conſcious of the end for which theſe are applied, reaſon, in this caſe, overlooks a diſproportion betwixt the image and the object to be illuſtrated, which it would have cenſured in another as impertinent and injudicious. Thus it was ſoon obſerved, that the end of poetic repreſentation could not be effectuated unleſs an indulgence was granted of the kind here mentioned. This indulgence therefore, has in all ages been permitted, and when the truth is not groſsly violated by circumſtances abſurd and incredible, the mind conſiders a certain diſparity as adding to the beauty, and heightening the impreſſion of the whole.

There is no perſonage of poetic ſtory, either ancient or modern, deſcribed with higher colouring, and in a greater variety of attitudes, than the *Satan* of Milton. Yet when he is compared by this ſublime genius (in different parts of his work) to the ſun in eclipſe *, to a comet †, to a planet ‡, and even to Atlas or Teneriff §, it is obvious, that theſe capital circumſtances are mentioned rather as their ſplendor, their portentous appearance, their magnitude, and their ſtability, ſerve to convey, in different points of view, ſome idea of the attributes that are aſcribed to him, than as theſe exhibit the exact proportions of his ſtature, the real expreſſion of his anger, or the unconquerable firmneſs of his ſtrength and reſolution. We admire the grandeur of that imagination which repreſents its object in ſo many noble and pictureſque attitudes, without either conceiving it to be fully equal to the compariſons in every circumſtance, or

* Paradiſe Loſt, b. i. l. 594. † Id. b. ii. l. 708.
‡ Id. b. vi. l. 313. § Id. b. iv. l. 987.

being

being offended becauſe we obſerve ſome inequality. The caſe is indeed different, when this inequality takes place in the illuſtration as falling below the original. The end of poetic deſcription (which is intended, as we formerly obſerved, to ſupply the emotions excited by perſonal inſpection) is loſt in this inſtance; and a character intended to raiſe admiration, excites no other paſſion than that of ridicule. It is (as we obſerved formerly) a proof of an author's underſtanding to avoid all compariſon, when the perſon or thing deſcribed is either ſuch as his imagination can illuſtrate by no adequate image, or when it is ſo great as that any illuſtration muſt neceſſarily fall below it. There are, indeed, few things capable of being illuſtrated, to which the genius of Milton was inferior. The *Deity himſelf*, only his judgment repreſented as ſuperior to whatever falls within the compaſs of human inveſtigation. His ſtrokes are therefore here as cautious and timid, as in other inſtances theſe are daring and maſterly.

A very high degree of ſublimity is often obtained by a ſudden and abrupt interrogation *. An author may ſeize the imagina-

* This method of becoming ſublime, acquires its excellence principally from exciting ſurprize, which an interrogation, or a ſeries of theſe, may awaken, ſo as to make a very powerful impreſſion. Here we muſt take care, however, not to include, under the denomination of ſublimity, ſuch ſtrokes of eloquence as may have ſtrength and pathos, though without that character of juſt elevation which conſtitutes this excellence. Without keeping this diſtinction in our eye, we ſhall be apt to confound with each other characters of Compoſition perfectly diſtinct; and what we do not thoroughly comprehend, we cannot hope ſucceſsfully to imitate. Quintilian, diſtinguiſhed as he uſually is by exquiſite taſte as well as accurate diſcernment, ſeems ſomewhat inadvertently to have fallen into this miſtake, by an example he produceth of ſublimity from an oration of Cicero. Having made much the ſame diſtinction betwixt a compariſon and tranſlation, as figures of rhetoric, which we have found Ariſtotle making betwixt an image and a metaphor, b. I. ſect. vi. p. 112. he proceeds to obſerve, that a wonderful degree of ſublimity is often obtained by the tranſlation as it is called, i. e. the giving life and action to an object wholly inanimate. The following bold interrogations, addreſſed to Tubero, he produceth as an example.—"Quid enim tuus ille Tubero deſtrictus in acie Pharſalica gladius agebat? Cujus latus ille mucro petebat? Qui ſenſus erat armorum

imagination at once by employing this figure; and when his own mind is filled with the grandeur of ſome idea, may exalt in the ſame manner that of another, without entering into circumſtantial detail. When the great POET, formerly mentioned, is going to paint the combat of Michael and Satan, as if at a loſs to convey his idea with ſuitable ſtrength, he exclaims,

> Who, though with the tongue
> Of angels, can relate, or to what things
> Liken on earth conſpicuous, that may liſt
> Human imagination to ſuch height
> Of god-like power?— Book vi.

Without mentioning any particular circumſtance here, relating to the combatants,

---

morum tuorum?" Cicer. pro Ligar. Quintil. lib. viii. cap. 6. The perſonification in this paſſage is undoubtedly ſtrong and maſterly in an eminent degree. But is it not an inſtance rather of the bold that animates, and of the *new* that ſurpriſeth, than of the grand that ſwells and elevates the imagination? Theſe are ſpheres that ought always to be conſidered as different; a point that can only be obtained by bringing to the ſtandard of certain eſtabliſhed rules, every example that falls under our cogniſance, as we ſhall thus be able to refer every effect to its proper principle, and will be unembarraſſed in our deciſions.

the author leads us to form the higheſt notion of their mutual ability, and intereſts us ſtrongly in the event of a tranſaction upon which he enters with ſo much ſolemnity, and to the full deſcription of which he repreſents created intelligence as inadequate. It would be improper to multiply examples of ſublimity obtained by this figure, as after having the track pointed out, every reader of ſenſibility will ſuggeſt theſe for himſelf.

The laſt, and principal ſource of real grandeur in Compoſition, conſiſts of bold and animated perſonifications. By this figure a ſentiment is often placed in a light the moſt perfectly advantageous, as it becomes pictureſque, and opens two inlets of pleaſure by gratifying at the ſame time the imagination and the ſenſes. It is on this account, that two of the moſt beautiful pieces of antiquity are ſo much, and ſo juſtly eſteemed; I mean the Hercules of Prodicus, and the noble portraiture of Cebes. We have, in a former work, conſidered this noble figure in a philoſophical light, and have endeavoured to account for its

various

various effects to which we here refer, as ſuperſeding an enlargement *. We need only at preſent to obſerve, that as the ſublime in almoſt every caſe requires the pictureſque to be united with it, and is perfected by this combination, the laſt mentioned character is never more completely obtained, than when imperſonated figures are placed before the imagination with their proper inſignia, and are repreſented as producing their natural effects. To the union of theſe circumſtances in Compoſition, we ſhall find, upon recollection, that the moſt admired examples, both of ancient and modern genius, owe all their impreſſion. Of this the winds in the Æneid ruſhing at the command of their ſovereign to ſwell the agitated ocean †; the deities, in the Iliad, occupying every department of nature, and animating every action of the poem ‡; the angels, in the Paradiſe Loſt, weilding the elements, and ſhaking the whole creation from its baſis §,

* Eſſay on Lyric Poetry, let. ii. p. 101. octav. edit.
† Æneid. lib. i. ‡ ΙΛΙΑΔ. paſſ.
§ Parad. Loſt, book vi.

or (to mention perſonifications more perfectly allegorical) the figure of Melancholy, in Pope's Eloiſa to Abelard *; of Night, in the Complaint of Young †; of the mountains ‡, the ocean, and the deluge §, in the Sacred writings, afford ſtriking and remarkable examples. In each of theſe, taken ſeparately, and in many others of the ſame kind, great objects, particular expreſſions, and appropriated colouring, form a combination which we ſurvey with aſtoniſhment, and whoſe effect upon a ſuſceptible mind is little inferior to that which would have ariſen from beholding the originals.

The great art of rendering either figures imperſonated for exciting admiration, or even inanimate objects pictureſque, lies in painting theſe with ſtrokes that in order to be diſcriminating muſt be particular. It is the ſame in eloquence, when an orator attempts to awaken the paſſions. The ſame expedient muſt be uſed to penetrate

* Eloiſ. to Abel. v. 163, to 171.
† Night i. v. 18—25.
‡ Habak. ch. iii. v. 3. § Pſalm. civ. v.

the

the heart in the laſt inſtance, which ſeizeth the imagination in the former. We may judge an object to be great from a deſcription which by no means renders it pictureſque, in the ſame manner as we may comprehend the general purport of obſervations, when we deſcend not to minute inveſtigation. Thus a mountain covering an immenſe track of country, or in general any object of uncommon magnitude, we acknowledge to be great in the common ſenſe of that word. But it is by the ſhadow trembling on the diſtant lake, by the cedar on its top ſeen like a ſhrub, and by the eagle hovering like a ſpeck above its ſummit: it is by theſe circumſtances that the whole becomes pictureſque; and the figure is more completely diſplayed by a ſingle ſtroke of this kind, than by any deſcription, however elaborate, of its ſize, height, and productions. When, on the other hand, the mind is to be powerfully impreſſed, and the heart to be penetrated by energetical repreſentation, this purpoſe is accompliſhed more effectually by one pointed appeal, by one ſtrong, ſignificant,

and

and particular expreſſion, than by a general enumeration, though conducted with the utmoſt accuracy, of all the motives by which the heart of man ought to be touched, and his practice to be regulated. Such is the diſtinction which the mind always makes betwixt what is approved ſolely by the underſtanding, and what is felt by the heart.

It will here naturally be aſked, by what means has this particularly its effect?—The mathematician, who meaſures exactly the height and dimenſions of a mountain, and the poet who paints it, obtains each his purpoſe by being particular; as the philoſopher in the ſame manner who enumerates motives of conduct, deſcends from general to more minute diſquiſition, in order to impreſs more powerfully, the truth of certain propoſitions. But here lies the difference betwixt the faculty of reaſon operating by itſelf, and combined with imagination, ſo as to conſtitute diſcernment. In the one caſe the mind cannot, by the moſt elaborate reſearch, obtain that purpoſe, which in the other one maſterly

terrly ſtroke inſtantly effectuates, without premeditation, ſtudy, or induſtry. It is the province of this laſt power (as we have already ſeen *) to ſuggeſt immediately every circumſtance that tends to place its object before the imagination in the moſt ſtriking point of view, and every motive that warms, agitates, and penetrates the heart. A great perſonage, therefore, repreſented as a principal actor in ſome intereſting tranſaction, moves at the ſame time in a dignified ſphere, and is rendered cogniſable by the eye of the reader, in conſequence of certain happy expreſſions thrown into his countenance, an attitude juſtly conceived, or an enterprize ſuitably adapted; in which inſtances the hand of a conſummate artiſt is indicated from the choice of circumſtances that carry ſublimity to its utmoſt height by uniting it with the pictureſque and animated.

The grand, in the art here examined, conſidered as it hath thus been with regard to its original, and to the various

* See book i. ſect. 4.

com-

combinations by which it is conſtituted, in order to produce its proper effect, ought to be diſtinguiſhed from the bombaſt or tumid, as it is called, which aſſumes upon many occaſions ſo nearly the appearance of genuine ſublimity, as to impoſe almoſt equally upon the inexperienced, as upon thoſe who are really defective in diſcernment. We are as ready to miſtake a ſeeming, for a real character of Compoſition, as we are in life to give a man credit for certain virtues, who has ſhadow without ſubſtance, and it is by experience only that we are undeceived of both. In order to prevent ſuch a deception in the preſent caſe, let us enquire what is underſtood by bombaſt Compoſition, and by what criteria it is to be known.

As we have ſeen that the true ſublime demands an union of noble ſentiments and elevated expreſſion; the falſe it is obvious, muſt argue a defect of either or both characteriſtics. In general, we may obſerve on this ſubject, that though even a diſcerning critic may be deceived by that appearance of this great character which

ſo

ſo nearly reſembles its reality; yet when he diſcovers upon recollection, that the pomp of language is elaborately diſplayed to ſet off either trite ſentiments, or inadequate objects, he will conclude that the affectation of grandeur is then predominant, and that the turgid takes place of the genuine ſublime. Expreſſion, therefore, is ſaid to be bombaſt when it is wrought up in a manner which the judicious reader perceives to be the effect of art rather than of nature; when much labour is beſtowed to collect together ſounding words and ſtrong epithets, which pour upon the mind at once, and, like the noiſe of a torrent, are calculated rather to ſtun than to exalt it. Vulgar ideas conveyed in elaborate periods; images far fetched, diſcordant, or unappropriated *; ſtrained

* Καθαπερ ναυς μυριx διαδραμυσα κυματα, και πολλους εκφυγουσα χειμωνας (ſays Chryſoſtom, ſpeaking of the Pharaiſee whoſe arrogance is condemned by our Saviour) ειτα ευ αυτω τω ςωματι τυ λιμενος σκοπελω τινι προσαραξασα παντα τον εναποκειμενον απολλυσι θησαυρον. Ουτω δε και ο Φαρισαιος

ουτος

ſtrained epithets, and deſcriptions rendered ſhocking by unnatural circumſtances *, expreſſed

---

ουτος τας ωουας της υηςειας απομειναις, και της αλλης αρετης απασης, επειδη γλωττης ουκ εκρατησεν εν αυτω τω λιμενι το φορτικον ναυαγιον υπεμεινε. ΧΡΥΣΟΣΘ. περι Φαρισ. This tumid and unappropriated image conveys to the mind of the reader no diſtinct idea of the action to which it is applied, and is beſides wrought up with improper circumſtances. In order to have rendered it properly adapted to the Pharaiſee's ſituation, the ſhip ought to have been daſhed on a rock, in conſequence of the mariner's abſurd confidence and precipitance. This man likewiſe, is not condemned for the offence of his tongue, but for the temper of mind that prompted to this tranſgreſſion.

* In order to have a full idea of the fault mentioned in the text, let us obſerve in what manner three of the moſt celebrated ancients have deſcribed the ſame action. Homer ſays, that the horſes who drew Hector's chariot, flew with great velocity from the left to the right wing of the battle.

Στειβοντες νεκυας τε και ασπιδας, αιματι δ' αξων
Νερθεν απας περαλακτο, και αντυγες αι περι διφρον
Ας αρ αφ' ιππειων οπλεων, ῥαθαμιγγες εβαλλον
Αι τ' απ' επισσωτρων.— ΙΛΙΑΔ. βιβ. Λ.

This deſcription is wrought up with ſtrong and picturesque circumſtances; but as the judgment of the poet prevented him from carrying it on to too great length, it preſents only to the mind a general idea of the ſlaughter and deſolation attending on battle. Virgil is ſtill more cautious: when Æneas flies from

one

expreſſed likewiſe in language equally affected, are examples of that tumid diction which

---

one end of the battle to the other, to avenge the death of Pallas, he ſays only,

Proxima quæque metit gladio, latumque per agmen
Ardens limitem agit ferro. Æneid. lib. x.

But Statius, deſcribing his hero in the ſame point of view, lengthens out the detail very improperly in this place, and by attempting to be more circumſtantial than the other, introduceth ſtrokes which tumid epithets, and a falſe grandeur of diction, render equally ſhocking and unnatural.

Hos jam ignorantes *teret* impius axis, at illi
Vulnere ſemineces, (nec devitare facultas)
Venturum ſuper ora vident, jam lubrica tabo
Fræna, nec inſiſti madidus dat temo, rotæque
Sanguine difficiles, & tardior ungula foſſis
Viſceribus: tunc ipſe furens, in morte relicta
Spicula, & e *mediis extantes oſſibus, haſtas*
Avellit. Strident animæ, currumque ſequuntur.
Thæbaid. lib. vii.

The feeling heart recoils from ſuch a picture as this, and a regulated imagination rejects it with horror. There is, likewiſe, a certain decorum of character to which an author ought to attend in the expreſſion of certain paſſions or actions. Circumſtances that are natural and proper in ſome ſituations, are indelicate and ſhocking in others. A warrior in the height of his rage, upon being ſeized and reduced to ſervitude by an enemy, might call upon lions and tigers to tear him to pieces, rather than drag out life in inglorious bondage. But this language in the mouth of a lady,

in

which conſtitutes the falſe ſublime. Theſe are indications of an imagination vigorous but diſtempered, and in a mind void of that ſenſibility which reaſon contributes to impreſs on a ſuſceptible heart, producing ſuch effects as theſe faculties, when juſtly combined, render objects of horror. It may be obſerved here, that this propenſity to ſwell out every circumſtance by falſe colouring, and thus to exceed the proportions of nature will diſtinguiſh the man directed by it from another whoſe mental powers are balanced with juſter equilibrium, as much when both are employed in placing the ſame object before

---

in any caſe whatever, is ſtrained and unnatural, as violating the ſoftneſs of the female character. When one of Arioſto's heroines ſays, therefore,

—— queſto il lupo, il leon, l'orſo
Venga e la tigre e ogn' altra fera brava;
Di cui l'ugna mi ſtracci e franga il morſo,
E morta mi ſtraſcini a la ſua cava. Cant. x.

this diſcourſe is extravagant, and this expreſſion inflated, when we conſider the perſon who pronounceth it. In other circumſtances the ſame ſtrokes might have been highly intereſting and pathetic. The reader will find many other examples of this kind in the Orlando, probably occaſioned by the manners of an age not thoroughly refined.

the mind, as when their ſubjects are different. We have adduced an example of this in the preceding note. It is by comparing in this manner repreſentations of the ſame kind at leaſt, if not preciſely of the ſame things, that we judge from the ſureſt teſt, the effect produced by theſe, of their real value, or demerit; and when we have thus diſcovered the cauſe of a fault, unperceived formerly in the performance of another, the ſame diſcernment leads us to correct it in our own.

Should it be neceſſary to lay down any other rule for avoiding the tumid in Compoſition (which to a man of true diſcernment, is more diſguſting than any other blemiſh in the art, as indicating more conſpicuouſly a defective underſtanding) we would adviſe a young writer to avoid, as much as poſſible, the peruſal of *declamatory* works, which are very inadequate models, and yet are imitated by a man of genius with ſo much facility, as renders the trial agreeable. By falling into this manner, he will gradually learn to ſubſtitute *words* in the place of *things*; and

having his ear filled with a ſounding period, will overlook the ſuperficial ſentiment often conveyed in it. The exterior attractions of the ſtyle of Compoſition, are like feathers beautifully variegated with an aſſemblage of colours floating on the ſurface of a ſtream impregnated with gold. With no other recommendation than a beautiful outſide, they arreſt the eye of a young and uninformed ſpectator. He may pleaſe himſelf with placing theſe in certain ſtriking arrangements, and may thus diſcover that they have their uſe. But it is by ſearching the ſtream to the bottom, that he will be taught not to reject the original objects of his choice as wholly contemptible, but to conſider their comparative utility, and value them proportionally.

We do not, however, mean when we thus adviſe a man of genius to avoid ſuch branches of Compoſition in very early life as may render his own expreſſion inflated and turgid, to recommend the ſame cautious procedure when his taſte is properly formed, and when he is able to

diſtin-

diſtinguiſh appearance from reality ſo juſtly as not to be impoſed upon by the former. In this ſituation he will receive information from obſerving the faults, even of performances excellent upon the whole, as he will at the ſame time judge of the cauſe from which theſe are derived, and of the method moſt happily adapted to correct them. With regard to the preſent ſubject more particularly, we may affirm with truth, that the ſame vigour of imagination which directed improperly, produceth tumid Compoſition, juſtly regulated, would have rendered it ſublime. The firſt of theſe, indeed, is commonly ſuppoſed to accompany either objects or ſentiments themſelves ſuperficial, or at leaſt ſuperficially examined. But it is certain, that the phraſe tumid or bombaſt, applied to any branch whatever of the art, indicates a certain diſproportion betwixt the thing repreſented, and the words employed for this purpoſe, and takes place, even when the idea is really great and important, as often as the diction by being ſtudiouſly heightened with ſwelling epi-

thets, is deemed to exceed that natural ſimplicity which excludes ſuperfluity.

It is univerſally acknowledged, that the genuine ſublime is no where to be met with in higher perfection, than in the Paradiſe Loſt. The ingenious author of the Life of Milton, imputes, and no doubt with truth, ſome part of that amazing grandeur which the imagination of this poet obtained, to his having indulged himſelf early in reading romances *. But "along with the honey ſucked from theſe weeds," ſome parts of their noxious quality would appear, likewiſe, to have tainted the Compoſition, even of this great genius. Hence ſome critics have cenſured his expreſſion as inflated, even when the moſt ſublime ideas are conveyed in it. In early life, therefore, what may have made ſome impreſſion upon ſuch a mind as that of this diſtinguiſhed poet, we may naturally judge to have an effect much more conſpicuous upon a genius of inferior order, ſuſceptible of the ſame effect from

* See Fenton's Life of Milton.

models

models improperly ſelected, and leſs able to detect their faults, or to reſiſt their influence. A peruſal, which, upon the whole, was beneficial in one caſe, in another will produce the bad, without the good effect, and taſte will be vitiated inſtead of being juſtly directed by the falſe model of imitation that is placed before the mind.

Upon the whole, the utmoſt purpoſe that culture, however conducted, can reach in directing to the attainment of ſublimity appears to be, that a man of moderate genius may be taught to diſtinguiſh with great propriety, the ſublime of ſentiment, or of deſcription, from that ſwelling diction in which neither upon examination is conſpicuous. He may feel very powerfully, the effect ariſing from that aſſemblage of circumſtances which gives grandeur to Compoſition, and when he cannot accompliſh a complete, will be deterred from attempting a partial imitation. The inventive power likewiſe by the ſteady contemplation of objects calculated to call it out into exerciſe, may acquire an energy,

and even compaſs ſuperior to that which nature, unimproved in this manner, would have enabled it to obtain. Theſe acquiſitions, valuable in themſelves, are enhanced greatly by the additional knowledge which a man of diſcernment gains by ſuch obſervation of the real ſtrength and proper ſphere of his faculties. Falſe ideas of an excellence, or a partial repreſentation of it, engage a man at beſt in a fruitleſs purſuit, which, when followed out to the utmoſt, produce in him only regret for not having thoroughly comprehended his work before he engaged in it. He, therefore, whoſe imagination is capable of making no extraordinary exertion, by acquiring a juſt idea of what is truly ſublime, will learn upon trial to imitate only ſuch beauties as fall within his ſphere; while that perſon, on the other hand, who may have been fitted by nature to join great conceptions with adequate execution will find by being accuſtomed early to contemplate what is truly admirable, the path to this excellence at laſt laid open to him. Inſtead, therefore, of ſtudying the

decoration

decoration of language as a principal ingredient of it (a miſtake of which a young mind is naturally ſuſceptible) he will diſcover this laſt to be wholly of ſecondary conſequence, as always accompanying elevated ſentiment, and though often obtaining where this great characteriſtic is not to be met with, yet never deficient where it is.

SECTION VI.

Of Nervous Compoſition.

THERE appears, at firſt view, to be a very cloſe affinity betwixt ſublime, and nervous, or forcible Compoſition, by which laſt term we underſtand ſtrength and energy, either of thought, of expreſſion, or of both taken together. Theſe, however, take their riſe from very diſtinct exertions of the intellectual powers, and produce very different effects. Sublime Compoſition is principally known by that height to which it exalts imagination; the

forcible or ſtrenuous, on the contrary, by the ſtrength and duration of that impreſſion which it makes either upon this power, or upon that of underſtanding. The one converſant always with the grand and magnificent, demands high colouring and copious illuſtration;—the other is commonly moſt perfect in its kind when the feweſt words are employed, and is always weakened by diffuſion. A man of ſublime genius, deſcribing the ſun as an object incomparably glorious, would dwell upon the extent and ſplendor of the orbs enlightened by him: whereas an idea of his influence would be *forcibly* conveyed by repreſenting the penetrating power of his rays in ſome particular inſtance. In ſhort, a man may have ſtrength of intellect who poſſeſſeth not ſublimity of imagination, though he who has completely obtained the laſt quality hath always a power of exerciſing the former. The ſublime analiſed into its principles, conſiſts of great ideas ſtrongly conceived and vividly painted; but a mind whoſe range is leſs comprehenſive, may carry conviction

viction to the judgment by ſtrenuous repreſentation, or ſtrike remorſe to the recoiling heart by a particular and forcible appeal.

This maſterly character of Compoſition is always the indication of exquiſite ſenſibility, and moſt commonly the reſult of it. This obſervation admits of eaſy proof. The impreſſion made by any repreſentation upon the mind of a reader, muſt undoubtedly bear a proportion to that which the original objects imprinted upon the thought of the author. We have here ſaid, that the one of theſe muſt *bear a proportion* to the other, it muſt not be concluded that this proportion will be perfect. Ideas, even when expreſſed with the greateſt energy, loſe always a part of their effect by being conveyed even in words that may be deemed moſt ſignificant. The mind takes into its firſt draught certain objects, or particular ſtrokes, which it cannot delineate with adequate emphaſis (in whatever ſphere likewiſe we ſuppoſe it to be employed) whoſe

whoſe abſence neceſſarily weakens the impreſſion, and the effect of the whole. In proof of this remark, we may refer every man who has made a trial of this kind to the teſtimony of experience; and thoſe whoſe powers are capable of making the moſt vigorous exertion, will probably be moſt ſenſible of its truth. A mind, therefore, whoſe feelings are weak, or whoſe powers though able to ſurvey objects accurately is but ſlightly impreſſed by them, may be rational or methodical, but can never be intereſting; and the ſecondary impreſſion (as it may be called) ſtill falling ſhort of the original, its work will ceaſe at laſt to excite attention.

We ſhall here conſider that energy of mind which gives riſe to this ſtriking ſignature of juſt Compoſition, as exerting its influence on the ſentiment, the diction, and illuſtrations or images, employed in the various branches of the art. After having viewed it in theſe lights, we ſhall endeavour to account for the inequality that takes place in many inſtances in the

works

works of the ſame author, characteriſed at one time by vigorous execution, as at others by languor, and imbecility. This will lead us to make ſome general remarks on the cauſes that deprive language of its due force in particular caſes, and on the method moſt proper to be uſed for avoiding, or for correcting this weakneſs.

I. A thought, in any field of ſpeculation whatever, is ſaid to be ſtrongly conceived when its ſignificance is ſuch as to command attention, and to impreſs very powerfully that faculty to which it is principally addreſſed. Sometimes, without having peruſed a work, we may apply this epithet with propriety to the mind that conducts hypotheſes or theory only upon hearing this laſt repreſented, when we diſcover in it not novelty only, which of itſelf excites no other ſenſation than that of ſurpriſe, but a certain ſtrenuous, and daring exertion of intellect, that indicates energy and vigour. When we hear, for inſtance, of a philoſopher who undertakes to diſprove the exiſtence of matter, the novelty

of

of the ſubject ſtrikes us with ſurprize, and we even expect ingenious diſquiſition in the proſecution of it. Refined inveſtigation, metaphyſical diſtinction, and every indication of ſubtle genius, we ſuppoſe will be diſplayed in ſuch a field; and upon meeting with theſe our expectations are gratified. But how different are the ideas excited upon hearing repreſented the plan of Burnet's Theory of the Earth!—The ſhell of the globe burſt open at the deluge by the waters lodged within its cavity as in an immenſe reſervoir; the rocks, mountains, precipices, promontories, iſlands formed in different parts by this univerſal rupture; the very idea, however unphiloſophical, that is preſented to us of the preſent earth as *an immenſe ruin* to be finally conſumed by the volcanos without, the combuſtible materials within, the ſun opening a paſſage to its *central fire*, and the earthquakes that unhinge its deepeſt foundations;—theſe are thoughts whoſe formation indicates vigorous intellectual exertion; and a ſtrength correſponding to

that

that of the cauſes, whoſe co-operating influence will effectuate the deſtruction of the frame of nature*!

The force with which ſentiments in the conduct of an extenſive plan impreſs the mind, depends upon circumſtances that vary according to the purpoſe which the writer hath ultimately in view. Political obſervations on the manners of an age, are ſtrenuouſly conveyed to the mind when there is nothing peculiarly emphatical in the expreſſion, when an enumeration is made of the different ideas which the ſame objects excite in men animated by virtuous emulation, or enervated by luxurious effeminacy.—"I have often heard "(ſays Salluſt) that Quintus Maximus, "Publius Scipio, and other eminent "members of the republic, uſed to ſay, "that when they gazed upon the ſtatues "of their anceſtors, their minds were moſt "vehemently excited to the practice of "virtue. Not that the wax, or the figure

* See particularly the two Diſſertations upon the Deluge, and the Conflagration.

"into

" into which it was moulded, poſſeſſed ſo " much power. But the memory of their " illuſtrious actions, imprinted by this " conveyance an idea ſo forcible and per- " manent upon the breaſts of theſe great " deſcendants, as never to be effaced until " the ſame virtue had rendered their fame " as extenſive, and their glory equally " complete.—But, on the other hand, (con- " tinues this hiſtorian) who is there of " us all, tainted as we are by corrupted " manners, whoſe emulation extends any " further than to the riches and magni- " ficence of our anceſtors? Probity and " action are out of the queſtion. Even " men of mean birth, who formerly ac- " quired diſtinguiſhed pre-eminence by " their virtue, obtain in theſe times the " firſt dignities of the ſtate; more by " theft and robbery, than by any com- " mendable occupation *." We have here

* " Sæpe audivi ego Quintum Maximum, Publium Scipionem, præterea civitatis noſtræ præclaros viros ſolitos ita dicere: quum majorum imagines intuerentur, vehementiſſime animum ſibi ad virtutem accendi: ſcilicet

here a ſtrong picture ſet before us of the degenerate manners of the Romans in our hiſtorian's age. The particular example ſelected of effects produced on the minds of men in his, and in a former age, from viewing the ſtatues of their predeceſſors, is happily choſen for this end; and without any exterior ornament of diction, conveys a more forcible idea of a people univerſally emaſculated by luxury, than the pomp of rhetorical declamation could ever have preſented.—Let us hear Demoſthenes on the ſame ſubject.—" It is not (ſays he) " ſurpriſing that a warlike, active, inde- " fatigable prince, (Philip) ſhould conquer " a people who are ſuſpended and irre- " ſolute. I wonder not at this. It would

---

ſcilicet non ceram illam neque figuram tantam vim in ſeſe habere: ſed memoria rerum geſtarum eam flammam egregiis viris in pectore creſcere, neque prius ſedari quam virtus eorum famam atque gloriam adæquaverit. At contra, quis eſt omnium his moribus quin divitiis & ſumptibus, non probitate neque induſtria cum majoribus ſuis contendat?—Etiam homines novi qui per virtutem ſoliti erant nobilitatem antevenire, furtim, & per latrocinia potius quam bonis artibus ad imperia & honores nituntur." Saluſt. Jugurth. in proem.

" be

" be ſurpriſing, indeed, if you, who do
" nothing in war, ſhould conquer an
" enemy who is attentive to all its opera-
" rations. This, Athenians, is aſtoniſhing,
" that you, who once attacked the people
" of Lacedæmon in defence of the liberty
" of Greece; who generouſly transferred
" to others thoſe emoluments which you
" might have detained for your own uſe;
" that you, in ſhort, who braved with
" ſuch intrepidity the dangers of war in
" their cauſe, ſhould now exert yourſelves
" ſo indolently in your own! that having
" riſked every thing formerly to ſave
" others, you now behold your own li-
" berty, and your own poſſeſſions, in the
" moſt imminent hazard, and are doing
" nothing to preſerve them *." In theſe examples

---

* Ου δη θαυματεον εσιν ει στρατευομενος, και πονεων εκεινος αυτος, και παρων εφ' απασι, και μηδενα καιρον μηδ'ωραν παραλειπομενος, ομως μελλοντων, και ψηφιζομεναν, και πυνθανομενων περιγιγνεται. Ου δη θαυμαζω τυτο εγω.—Τυναντιον γαρ ην θαυμαστον ει μηδεν ποιυντες ημεις ων τοις πολεμυσι προσηκει τα παντα ποιυντος α δει περιημεν.—Αλλ' εκεινο θαυμαζω,

ει

examples we obſerve and are impreſſed wholly by the ſentiment, which acquires ſuch ſtrength from the compariſon here carried on, as muſt have been felt univerſally, whatever expreſſion had been ſelected to convey it. The correſpondence of this laſt circumſtance is an improvement to which we attend afterwards with ſatisfaction, when we obſerve the propriety with which embelliſhment of every kind is avoided in it, as the effect of ſo forcible and intereſting an application muſt at leaſt have been weakened by ſuch an attempt, if not in a great meaſure ſuperſeded.

In the conduct of philoſophical inveſtigation a thought acquires ſtrength, and the impreſſion made by it is rendered dur-

---

ει Λακεδαιμονιοις μεν ωοτε ω Ανδρες Αθηναιοι υπερ των ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΩΝ ΔΙΚΑΙΩΝ αντηρατε, και ωολλα ιδια ωλεονεκτησαι ωολλακις υμιν εξον ικ εθελησατε αλλ' ινα οι αλλοι τυχωσι των δικαιων τα υμετερα αυτων ανελισκετε εισφεροντες, και ωροεκινδενευετε ςρατευομενοι. Νυν δε οκνειτε εξιεναι, και μελλετε εισφερειν υπερ των υμετερων αυτων κτηματων. Και τυς μεν αλλυς σεσωκατε ΠΟΛΛΑΚΙΣ ΠΑΝΤΑΣ, και καθ' εκαςον ευ μερει. Τα δε ΥΜΕΤΕΡΑ αυτων απολωληκοτες καθησθε. ΔΗΜΟΣΘ. Ολυνθια, κεφ. β.

able when its energy is diſplayed in a climax juſtly conſtituted, the parts of which are diſtinct, and the procedure rational. A frivolous queſtion connected remotely with ſuch a thought, but whoſe nature has not been ſufficiently comprehended, is ſhown likewiſe in a clearer and ſtronger light, by being ſimply repeated after having carried on ſuch a repreſentation, than by any other method adopted for this purpoſe. It is difficult to ſeparate upon many occaſions, queſtions that miniſter wholly to curioſity, from ſuch as tend to convey real information; and even when this diſtinction is made, the former muſt be placed in a very conſpicuous point of view, in order to deter men ſtimulated by a powerful paſſion from engaging in enquiries that can be brought to no ſatisfactory concluſion, though the mind is flattered in a very different manner when theſe are firſt ſet before it. How many profound metaphyſical ſpeculations of no emolument to the reader, who receives diſguſt inſtead of inſtruction from their peruſal, and of great detriment to the author,

thor, who, by launching beyond his depth, has made no other diſcovery than the defect of his own underſtanding; how many of theſe might have been avoided, had the perſons employed in them felt the effect of the following nervous reaſoning of the Roman philoſopher, which ſhows the frivolous nature of the ſubjects that have ſo long engroſſed their attention! After having, in general, obſerved of the mind, that whatever ſubſtance that is which feels, thinks, lives, and animates the body, it muſt be celeſtial, and conſequently eternal; he illuſtrates his reaſoning by ſaying, that even the Deity himſelf we conceive only to be a Being diſengaged from all material obſtruction, endowed with a principle of eternal motion, which he communicates to all things. Of this kind (ſays he) and of the ſame nature is the human mind.—"But (replies ſome *minute* enquirer) where "is this mind, and what is it after all?—"Apply (ſays our illuſtrious philoſopher) "theſe queſtions to thy own ſoul.—Canſt "thou anſwer them?—No.—But becauſe "I have not received every faculty I

" would *wiſh* to poſſeſs, doſt thou, there-
" fore, forbid me to make uſe of ſuch as
" are really conferred on me?—What the
" mind perceives not, its own form or
" appearance is of leaſt conſequence. It
" perceives, undoubtedly, at all times
" ſtrength, ſagacity, memory, action, ce-
" lerity.—Theſe objects are great, divine,
" eternal. After knowing thus much
" of its nature, queſtions that regard its
" countenance, and place of reſidence, are
" not worth an anſwer *."

In this noble paſſage the author diſtinguiſheth, with true philoſophical ſagacity, the uſeful from the trifling and abſurd in an enquiry of the greateſt importance; and by a climax well-conducted, when he enforceth the firſt mentioned objects (hæc

* " Ubi igitur, & qualis eſt iſta mens?—Ubi *tua* & *qualis?*—Poteſne dicere? An ſi omnia ad intelligendum non habeo quæ habere vellem; ne his quidem quæ habeo mihi per *te* uti licebit?—Non videt animus quod minimum eſt ſuam formam.—Vim certe ſagacitatem, memoriam, motus, celeritatem videt. Hæc magna, hæc divina, hæc ſempiterna ſunt.—Qua facie quidem ſit, aut ubi habitet ne quærendum quidem eſt." Tuſcul. Diſput. lib. i. cap. 28.

magna,

magna, hæc divina, hæc ſempiterna ſunt) impreſſeth as powerfully upon the mind a conviction of their utility, as of the frivolous nature of the others rendered more conſpicuous by being placed in oppoſition. Uniting, therefore, the diſtinct characters of a philoſopher and an orator, he forcibly inculcates thoſe truths as an eloquent writer, which as a philoſopher he diſcerned to have importance.

II. Thus far we have conſidered the character of juſt Compoſition, here examined, as influencing various kinds of ſentiment, when unaccompanied with any uncommon energy of diction, or ſtrength of illuſtration. When theſe laſt concur with the former, as well in diſpoſition as in degree, the combination is perfect, and is known by the vigour and permanence of its impreſſion. It is true, indeed, that a ſentiment ſtrongly conceived communicates a correſponding emphaſis to expreſſion at all times, in the ſame manner as a paſſion powerfully excited, gives ardor and vivacity to the countenance. In certain inſtances, when a detail becomes

deeply intereſting, and when an addreſs is pointed to the heart, no art, unleſs it is very refined, ought (as we have already ſhown *) to be made uſe of. A few ſimple words, juſt inſpired by the occaſion, produce the full effect to be brought about in ſuch circumſtances as theſe; and an attempt to amplify or illuſtrate, would either weaken or ſubvert it. A man, feeling the preſſure of ſome great affliction, will make uſe of few words. But the two extremes of perfect indifference, or abſolute deſpair, adopt none at all. A maſterly writer, therefore, will in the firſt caſe employ few ſtrokes, though theſe ſignificant and ſtrongly expreſſive. In conducting a paſſion to the laſt exceſs, he will know that all deſcription hath a boundary aſſigned to it; and by acting like the painter, who gave various expreſſions to the perſons attending the ſacrifice of Iphigenia, but veiled the face of her father, he will finiſh a picture incomparably more animated in ſuch inſtances, than language and images could make out.

* Vol. I. ſect. vii. Note.

But

But theſe obſervations relating to a few particular and very ſingular caſes, though they could not with any propriety have been omitted, yet have no weight when referred to the more uſual ſubjects of Compoſition, in which thoughts that are recommended intrinſically rather by their uſe than their novelty, and which though approved by the power of underſtanding, yet impreſs but ſlightly that of memory when retailed in unornamented expreſſion, acquire peculiar ſignificance by being conveyed in emphatical language, or preſſed home by appropriated and ſtriking illuſtration. It is principally by means of this energy, communicated to the *ſtyle* of Compoſition, that the two arts of eloquence and poetry make impreſſions more vigorous and permanent than any other. Nor ought the advantages derived from this circumſtance to be conſidered by the diſpaſſionate philoſopher, as even of ſecondary conſequence, far leſs as frivolous and unneceſſary. If we allow that he is the moſt uſeful member of ſociety, whoſe thoughts by being ſtrenuouſly inculcated

are moſt univerſally uſeful, a man who is capable in this manner of effectuating ſuch a purpoſe is in every valuable ſenſe preferable to him whoſe ſentiments, however excellent in themſelves, are enervated by feeble expreſſion, or rendered dry by being defectively illuſtrated.

It is univerſally acknowledged, that genius never commands admiration more powerfully than when it is employed in giving ſuch ſignificance to an uſeful precept, or common ſentiment, as by ſeizing the faculty of imagination makes a durable impreſſion upon that of remembrance. When a thought is truly ſublime, or is ſtrongly marked by its originality, we expect to meet with a correſponding energy in the diction, and look upon this as a neceſſary accompaniment. But the mind exerts a creative energy that is contemplated with aſtoniſhment when we find it giving diſtinction to every idea that falls under its cogniſance; and when ſuch thoughts as we have often met with, and have as frequently neglected, are improved by paſſing through this intellectual alembic ſo as to influence conduct.

In order to produce the purpoſes here mentioned, it ought by no means to be conſidered as neceſſary, that we make uſe, upon all occaſions, of the figures or idioms of poetry. Theſe, it is no doubt true, when adapted to their objects with propriety, contribute as much as any other means to accompliſh it effectually. Though an important expedient, however this is not an only one, and its uſe, though indiſpenſable upon ſome occaſions, would be unſuitable in many caſes, and injudicious. Thoughts, when conſidered as forming in various combinations the parts of a comprehenſive plan to be detailed in Compoſition, will naturally be viewed either as ſupporting each other in a connected ſeries when the argumentation is cloſely carried on, or as ſtanding more looſe and detached, when a queſtion may require to be illuſtrated, and to be expoſed in a variety of lights. In the firſt caſe, it is requiſite, above all other circumſtances, in order to convey each of theſe as ſtrongly as poſſible to the mind, that the

author

author ſhould make uſe of as few words as may be conſiſtent with that perſpicuity which ought to be his ultimate aim. Metaphors he may and ought to adopt, becauſe theſe, when well applied, render an argument clear and forcible at the ſame time. But while he is not ſparing of this figure, a judicious writer will ſtudy to uſe it in the preſent inſtance, only when the idea thus enforced would have otherwiſe been obſcure, or ſo unimportant as not to have fixed attention *. Nor is it injurious to

* I know no work, either ancient or modern, in which the figure here recommended is introduced with greater force and propriety than in the excellent work of Quintilian, to which we have ſo frequently referred. This admirable critic, ſeems to have underſtood thoroughly both their nature and their uſe in Compoſition. We have already conſidered his definition of a metaphor, and have ſhown its juſtneſs. In the ſixth chapter of his eighth book, the curious reader will find him treating this ſubject at great length, and illuſtrating his remarks by numerous examples. To this, therefore, we refer him. Let us only obſerve, how juſtly he has himſelf exemplified his own rules. He ſays of this figure in general, that when admitted properly into Compoſition it conveys

to the reputation of any author, however eminent, to affirm, that in a work of length, particularly of the argumentative kind, many ſuch ideas muſt neceſſarily be admitted. In the proof of every hypotheſis, however paradoxical, the principles to which the mind originally recurs in order to eſtabliſh a concluſion, muſt be ſuch as are univerſally intelligible; and

---

conveys an idea more forcibly than the words in whoſe room it is placed. "Metaphora plus valere debet eo quod expellit." Inſtit. lib. ii. c. 3. He mentions it likewiſe as a means to render an object clear and intelligible. Lib. viii. cap. 6. Among many other paſſages of his work, which might here be adduced as proofs of the conformity that takes place betwixt his rules and his practice, the following, in which both purpoſes are accompliſhed at once, is remarkable. "Nec mirum (ſays he, ſpeaking of the action of an orator) ſi eſta quæ tamen in *aliquo* ſunt poſita *motu* tantum in animis valent, quum pictura *tacens opus*, & *habitus* ſemper *ejuſdem* ſic in intimos penetret affectus, ut ipſam vim dicendi nonnunquam ſuperare videatur." Inſtit. lib. xi. cap. 3. Nothing can be more appropriated and forcible, than the language and illuſtration employed here. How vividly is the mind impreſſed with the effect ariſing from the *real action* of a conſummate orator, perpetually varying when it recollects the impreſſion made upon it by one ſingle attitude imitated in painting!

he,

he, who in a philoſophical diſquiſition calculated perhaps upon the whole to let in new light upon the mind, ſhould expect to be entertained by the novelty of theſe contemplated ſeparately without regard to the ultimate purpoſe, would form an expectation that can never be gratified. It is not ſo much to the firſt principles laid down (which cannot be too ſimple and obvious) that we attend, as to their diſpoſition and tendency to effectuate a certain end. As we are apt, however, to be fatigued by following out theſe at length, which make of themſelves no very ſtrong impreſſion, it is of great conſequence to an author, that his diction be rendered peculiarly emphatical in this caſe, by a choice of ſignificant words, and by the beauty of expreſſive metaphors happily interwoven (if we may thus term it) in the compoſition, that theſe may be read with attention, and recollected with facility.

We have, in a former ſection, adduced an example of Compoſition, diſtinguiſhed

at

at the ſame time by ſtrength and ſimplicity in hiſtorical narration *. It is difficult to illuſtrate, in the ſame manner, our obſervations on the moſt proper method of rendering expreſſion nervous in the conduct of an argumentative detail; becauſe ſuch examples, in order to be complete, would run into too great length. Obſerve, however, in what manner one of the greateſt maſters of language, among the ancients, at the ſame time elucidates and enforceth a maxim by no means remarkable for its novelty; but rendered extremely ſo by the expreſſive words that are ſelected to convey it. Speaking of the perſons that are beſt qualified for the purpoſe of education, our author ſays,—"Inprimis evitandus, & in pueris præcipue magiſter aridus, non minus quam teneris adhuc plantis ſiccum & ſine humore ullo ſolum. Inde fiunt humiles ſtatim & velut terram ſpectantes qui nihil ſupra quotidianum ſermonem attollere audeant.—Macies illis pro ſanitate, & judicii loco infir-

* Book II. ſect. ii.

mitas

mitas eſt.—Quare mihi ne maturitas quidem ipſa feſtinet, nec muſta in lacu ſtatim auſtera ſint," &c. Quintil. Inſtit. lib. ii. c. 4. It is by metaphors thus happily blended with the thought, and coaleſcing with it, as it were, that every object becomes dignified and ſignificant; and we are led to admire the genius of one man, endowed with this diſtinguiſhing talent, in the expreſſion of thoſe very ideas which in a performance diveſted of it would be deemed vulgar or inſignificant. In many caſes, however, it is no doubt neither proper nor indeed practicable to preſerve this figured diction, particularly when a few obvious truths are laid down in the language wholly unornamented as the baſis of an hypotheſis. The fitteſt method of rendering Compoſition nervous in ſuch inſtances, is to make uſe of as few words as the nature of the ſubject will admit, and to avoid enlargements when not abſolutely neceſſary. A writer of good ſenſe never diſcovers this quality more obviouſly, than by appearing always to know when he has juſt ſaid enough. Redundant epithet

he

he will ſhun, as enervating what it is applied to ſtrengthen, and declamation as relaxing attention, which is kept up by obſerving the end of a certain reſearch, advancing nearer as we proceed, and more as it were, within our reach. A ſubject, treated upon theſe principles, will pleaſe by coherence, when not diſtinguiſhed by vigour of ſentiment; and language, where it cannot obtain the character of remarkable force, will yet have ſignificance by gaining that of propriety.

Thus far we have conſidered the ſubject of this ſection, as improving the effect of ſentiments that ſtand in cloſe connection, and appear with the greateſt poſſible advantage in conſequence of well-adapted expreſſion.

When the former, however, either have greater energy themſelves, or admit in certain inſtances of more copious and forcible illuſtratſon, a defect of ſtrength in the ſtyle of an author's Compoſition becomes conſpicuous, in proportion as its prevalence is required as expedient or neceſſary. This character of the art, as

appro-

appropriated more particularly to one ſpecies of it than to another, and conſtituted by different means when the objects vary to which it is applied, we ſhall have occaſion afterwards to examine. Some general obſervations on theſe at preſent, it may here be proper to introduce.

1. It was formerly remarked, when we treated of the grand in Compoſition, that an object is often *rendered* ſublime by an happy diſpoſition of ſome preceding circumſtances *. This we then attempted to confirm by examples. But the arrangement of previous ideas, though it will ſhow us in any work whatever at what time the thought ought to have ſtrength, and the diction correſponding energy; and in conſequence of this diſcovery will make us immediately ſenſible when either or both is deficient, yet imparts not vigour as in the preceding inſtance it may do ſublimity to an object. Yet by raiſing our expectations, it renders us particularly conſcious of that weakneſs in the mind of

* Sect. v.

an

an author to which we owe a diſappointment. Thus a philoſopher expoſing the futility of an objection, an hiſtorian relating a deſperate engagement, an orator ſumming up his various arguments in an appeal required to be pointed, particular, and forcible; theſe gratify our hope indeed, when they acquit themſelves properly; but it is not to the diſpoſition of preceding circumſtances that either the thought or expreſſion owes its energy. It is wholly to the real force of the one, and to the correſponding propriety of the other, both which we examine apart. The ſentiments of Socrates, therefore, communicated to his judges after he had been condemned to drink the hemlock, acquire ſublimity from his peculiar ſituation. We conſider this circumſtance, and pronounce theſe to be exalted. But when we come to examine the force of his reaſoning, and the words he makes uſe of as juſtly or unequally adapted, it is quite another matter. We drop immediately every thought of his ſituation, and are impreſſed only by the objects then contemplated.

It ought likewiſe to be obſerved, that the ſublimity which owes its origin to a certain arrangement of previous incidents admits of degrees. It is true, indeed, that we expect the thoughts as well as the conduct of a great mind tried with adverſity, to be dignified and conſiſtent. But ſhould theſe (the former particularly) be noble, though not aſtoniſhing, we ſtill, with truth, denominate them ſublime. It is otherwiſe when we conſider vigour of intellect, as indicated by certain ideas, conveyed with ſuitable emphaſis of language. When an expectation of this kind is once raiſed, the leaſt failure in gratifying it is deemed to be a weakneſs. The philoſopher, hiſtorian, or orator, who ſhould fail to exert ſome part of that energy which his ſubject might neceſſarily demand, or the reader expect from his manner of conducting it, would be deemed unequal to the taſk he had undertaken to execute, and diſqualified to riſe with becoming vigour to his work.—Let us try an example.

When

When Isocrates has endeavoured to persuade Philip, in the oration addressed to this monarch, to bring about a general good understanding among the states of Greece, with whom at that time he was living in amity, we expect that he will immediately propose some motive of powerful efficacy, to make him follow an admonition apparently so contrary to his interest. But instead of meeting with any thing of this kind at the time we naturally look for it,—after having told him, that by following the counsel he had given him, "he would at the same time conciliate the "Greeks, and terrify the Barbarians *," our author makes a florid and elaborate panygeric on himself, who, in thinking rightly, and in directing to proper and honourable means, is inferior, he informs us, to no man whatever †.—Every reader must

* Ην τα τοιαυτα προαιρη πραττειν εξων, τοις μεν Ελλησιν εση πιστος, τοις δε βαρβαροις φοβερος. ΙΣΟΚ. προς Φιλιπ. Λογ.

† Το δε φρονειν ευ, και πεπαιδευεσθαι καλως (ει και τις αγροικοτερον ειναι φησει το ρηθεν) αμφισβητων και

muſt be ſenſible that there is great weakneſs in this conduct. It anſwers no purpoſe

---

ϑειην αν εμαυτον ϰϰ εν τοις απολελειμμενοις, αλλ' εν τοις ϖροεχουσι των αλλων. Id. ibid. This diſcourſe of Iſocrates has, I know, been greatly applauded in general; and one of the beſt ancient critics, Dionyſius Halicarnaſſeus, recommends it as proper to be read by princes, to inſtil into their hearts the love of virtue. The tendency of ſome excellent moral obſervations in it to promote this purpoſe, we ſhall by no means diſpute. It is only cenſured here as a Compoſition defective in ſtrength of thought, and which ſinks at that time when we expect the moſt vigorous and maſterly execution. With regard to the arguments by which our author propoſeth afterwards to convince Philip of the utility of his propoſal, appoſite as theſe have been judged to the accompliſhment of this end, we will not be ſurpriſed upon reflection, that theſe made no ſtrong impreſſion on the mind of the Macedonian. What is his ſcheme taken altogether? After conciliating the attachment of all the Greek cities by offices of friendſhip, he exhorts this prince to march into Aſia, and ſubdue the Perſian nation. But this, ſurely, was not a plan likely to be proſecuted by Philip, who knew well that as long as Greece itſelf was left unſubdued, no profeſſions of alliance from that quarter were to be depended upon. Jealous of its liberty, and of the ambition of this enterpriſing prince, Greece he was well aware would have obſtructed inſtead of forwarding his deſign, as expecting, like the mouſe in the fable, that after having devoured the *greater* objects, the leſſer would fall an eaſy

poſe but that of exciting diſguſt, and of prejudicing us, as we have obſerved him to do in a former inſtance, againſt every thing he afterwards advanceth on the ſubject. Strength of intellect (however conſpicuouſly a character may be marked by vanity) will upon ſuch an occaſion be diſ-

---

eaſy prey to his rapacity. His inſincerity was too well known to make his promiſes be regarded as of any conſequence. Philip, therefore, purſued a much better plan than that propoſed to him here by Iſocrates: which was, to put it beyond the power of his enemies at home to give him diſturbance, before he thought of carrying the war into a foreign empire. The events that fell out upon the death of this great prince, after he had effectuated this purpoſe, clearly ſhow us what meaſures the ſtates of Greece would have adopted had he left them at liberty by marching ſooner into Aſia. Debilitated as they they were, they forgot in a moment the loſs of Cheronæa, and the ſame people who had choſen Philip their generaliſſimo, took arms againſt Alexander. Should it be ſaid that the Greeks had at laſt been driven by force to take that courſe with regard to the former, which they might formerly have adopted from choice; I have already ſhown that this would never have been the caſe, from their opinion of this man's inſincerity. Theſe remarks, though foreign to the preſent ſubject, the author hopes that his readers will excuſe, as being naturally ſuggeſted by the mention of this celebrated oration.

covered by ſtrenuous argumentation, and by motives (whether concluſive or not,) yet enforced as powerfully as the nature of the ſubject would admit.

The proof adduced here of intellectual debility, exhibits it principally as influencing the ſentiment and conduct of a diſcourſe. We obſerve it to take place in the diction, more particularly when an author, after having acquitted himſelf properly in conducting the ſubordinate branches of his theme, fails juſt at the moſt important criſis of uſing that "verbum ardens," that language full of energy, by which we then expect his Compoſition to be diſtinguiſhed in all caſes, or thoſe pictureſque and animated images which ought more particularly to predominate in the ſpheres of eloquence and poetry. It would be endleſs to adduce examples in proof of this remark, as the reader of taſte may collect many for himſelf, both from ancient and modern performances. We may obſerve, however, that the diſpoſition of previous circumſtances prevents us from being pleaſed, even with moderate execution

tion at ſuch a time, becauſe from theſe we have naturally been led to expect ſomething higher. When after having brought his argument to a period, a philoſopher comes to place the whole in one conſiſtent ſummary before the mind; when after having expoſed the falſhood of a plauſible repreſentation, he proceeds to examine its conſequences, we conſider him as deficient in ſtrength of conception and of feeling, whoſe ideas are not then conveyed with ſuch emphaſis as produceth at once a very ſenſible and permanent effect. The ſame remark may be applied to the hiſtorian, whoſe indignation we ſuppoſe to be rouſed by having recorded an infamous tranſaction; and in ſimilar caſes to the orator, and the poet.

However, therefore, in certain circumſtances that conduct may be deemed great which riſeth not to the wonderful, yet when ſtrength, either of language or of ſentiment, is neceſſarily required, we make no allowance as in the other caſe for defect in either, which is immediately ſuppoſed to indicate a mind whoſe feelings

are weak, or whoſe powers are diſproportioned to their ſubject. What is the cauſe for which we judge ſo differently of theſe characters of Compoſition?—Upon recollection we ſhall find it to lie in the ends which theſe propoſe ſeparately to accompliſh.—The ſublime (we have already ſeen) is always directed to raiſe *admiration.* Whatever object excites this paſſion we contemplate as great; but the imagination, which principally takes cogniſance of it, without being exalted to its higheſt ſphere, may yet be raiſed to a ſuperior one, and betwixt the dignified that awakes, and the aſtoniſhing that holds it in almoſt viewleſs exſtaſy, there are many degrees that conſtitute (if we may thus expreſs it) the range of *the ſublime.* Expectation, therefore, even when excited in the higheſt degree, may be in ſome meaſure diſappointed when an idea though not reaching the firſt, yet falls not beneath the loweſt ſtep of this ſcale, and is ſtill regarded as noble, though by no means aſtoniſhingly exalted.—But it is otherwiſe with the nervous in Compoſition, of which the

heart,

heart, not the imagination, decides; and of whoſe defect, when it is expected eminently to predominate, we are rendered ſenſible by *feeling*. Here there are no other degrees than thoſe that are preſcribed by the nature of the ſubject. We expect not, for inſtance, that Plato ſhould convey his arguments with the ſame energy with which Homer ſets before us the deeds of Achilles. But when once we are intereſted thoroughly in a queſtion, a reflection that might have ſignificance in one connection, is wholly unintereſting in another, and an image of unqueſtioned energy, when applied to ſome circumſtances, will be cenſured in others, as weak, and unappropriated *.

A

* In conducting a work, compoſed of very complicated members to a period, to expect that *equal* energy of mind ſhould be diſplayed upon every occaſion when this may, no doubt, be neceſſary, would be idle and extravagant. Of all authors whatever, *Homer* is perhaps the leaſt defective of this quality in general. Yet amidſt that amazing variety of objects pourtrayed in the Iliad, need we wonder if we ſometimes meet with an image comparatively weak at leaſt, and inadequate to its original?—One inſtance of this kind

it

A writer of diſcernment, therefore, ought to be particularly cautious, leſt in the

---

it may be to the preſent purpoſe to ſelect. When Achilles, in the twenty-firſt book of the Iliad, engages in a combat, fruitful of new and aſtoniſhing events, with the river Scamander, the genius of the ſtream is repreſented as raiſing it from the bottom, and attempting to overwhelm this formidable enemy, by loading his waves with the carcaſes with which he had choaked up the tide. Achilles ſeizeth a tree, born down by the current, and leaps from it on the ſhore. But the god attacks him on all ſides. To convey an idea of the inundation burſting every where on his head, Homer makes uſe of the following image. "As when a labouring man brings a rill of water "from its fountain to refreſh his plants, and beautify "his garden, holding the line in his hand, and clear-"ing the paſſage with his ſpade, on a ſudden the "waters ſtreaming before him down the declivity "throw the pebbles into confuſion, and inſtead of "following, go before their leader.—So with what-"ever rapidity Achilles flew, Scamander, ſtill ſwifter, "rolled his billows before him." ΙΔΙΑΔ. φ. α. l. 257. This illuſtration has undoubtedly great beauty. It gives an entertaining variety to the narration, and (what is not always the caſe with Homer's images) is adapted to its object in every circumſtance. But with all theſe advantages in its favour, if it is true (as we have endeavoured to prove at ſome length, ſect. v.) that the image which is employed to ſet a great action or perſonage before our eyes, ought to *exceed* rather than fall ſhort of the original, we ſhall then

the original choice of his ſubject he ſhould fix upon one demanding a more ſtrenuous exertion of intellect than that to which his mind is adequate; becauſe there is not one among all the characters of Compo-

---

then pronounce this to be defective as a forcible repreſentation. For though a ſtream defeating the intention of the labourer who means to ſcoop out a channel for it, by overflowing the grounds before him, repreſents to us Achilles ſurrounded by the Scamander, whoſe waves retarded his purſuit of the Trojans, and were before him wherever he went;—yet ſurely the rill that waters a garden defeating the purpoſe of a huſbandman, is an image as diſproportioned to the impetuous Scamander guided by a God, charging its billows with heaps of dead, and breaking on the head of Achilles, as the huſbandman himſelf ſtanding with his ſpade in his hand, and ſeeing his work overwhelmed by the water, is inferior to this hero leaping on the ſhore, and ſpringing at every bound from this divinity as far as a warrior can throw a ſpear.—The illuſtration, therefore, is here inadequate to its original in point of ſtrength. The circumſtances of the former, though beautiful when contemplated alone, yet ſhrink into nothing when placed in compariſon with the latter. Theſe are appropriated, but not pictureſque. If, however, a defect of this kind can never be excuſed, it muſt ſurely be pardoned in ſuch a work as the Iliad, in which an imagination, kept perpetually on the ſtretch, has erred as ſeldom in this way as it ever did in any caſe, when not guided by inſpiration.

ſition,

ſition, whoſe deficiency is ſooner obſerved, even in a ſlight degree, than this of *vigorous* execution; nor is there any for which when once detected, a performance is more univerſally cenſured. When our expectation is carried to a certain height, either from the nature of the theme itſelf, or from the manner in which it is conducted, we become perfectly ſenſible of an author's weakneſs, who, though adequate to every inferior repreſentation, falls off when engaged in the moſt important; and by ſubſtituting affected, in place of natural energy, diſcovers the debility of talents improperly exerted, which in a ſphere better adapted to their exerciſe, might have been employed with propriety and emolument. On the contrary, however, it ought to be obſerved, that as a certain previous arrangement of ideas renders a defect of ſtrength, either in thought or expreſſion, remarkably perceptible to a man of diſcernment, ſo when the execution is adequate in this character to the ſubject, the circumſtance above-mentioned contributes equally to render us ſenſible of its

full

full effect. Memory is never more permanently impreſſed, than when expectation is ſucceſsfully gratified; and an author, who in the developement of his plan exerts an energy proportioned to the occaſion, at the ſame time that he riſeth in his reader's eſtimation, effectuates a purpoſe by the ſignificance given to every object, which the ſame repreſentation leſs ſtrenuouſly enforced, or placed in another connection could never have accompliſhed.

2. As a writer, therefore, whoſe compoſition is diſtinguiſhed as nervous or forcible, may render this character perfectly conſpicuous, by bringing on that *criſis* in his diſcourſe at which it is required moſt particularly to predominate; ſo in order to preſerve it univerſally as much as the nature of a ſubject will admit, he ought to ſelect as often as poſſible, lively and appropriated illuſtrations. It would be wholly uſeleſs to enlarge here upon theſe as communicating peculiar energy to ſentiments, and even rendering their influence at ſometimes irreſiſtible; becauſe we have already diſcuſſed this branch of our

ſubject

ſubject at conſiderable length. We ſhall therefore, only obſerve at preſent, with regard to the *ſtrength* which theſe give to Compoſition, that two things are requiſite to conſtitute this character. 1ſt. That the image ſhould either be really ſtronger than the object to which it is applied, or at leaſt ſhould be ſuppoſed to exceed it in this reſpect. 2dly, That foreign or adventitious circumſtances, ſhould, if poſſible, be wholly avoided in the application, or admitted as ſeparately as poſſible.

That an illuſtration ought uſually to exceed its original pattern in ſtrength, to convey a forcible, as much as in grandeur to conſtitute a ſublime repreſentation, will be acknowledged upon the principles formerly enumerated. As it is the buſineſs of every writer to intereſt his readers in the ſubject of which he treats, thoſe images which are called in particularly to animate his narration, ought to exceed the objects in ſtrength which theſe are brought to illuſtrate, in order to ſupply, in ſome meaſure, the loſs of *ocular evidence*, to which all narration is inadequate. When

an

an illuſtration, in the ſame manner, is *appropriated* to a *ſentiment*, which in a certain connection hath peculiar emphaſis, we are ſo far from condemning the author for mixing *bolder* ſtrokes in his illuſtration than we might conceive the original to have ſuggeſted, that we look upon theſe as indications of maſterly execution. Theſe rules may be deemed perhaps at firſt view not to be applicable to every caſe, and therefore to be imperfect. A ſentiment (it may be ſaid with truth) ſometimes acquires great ſtrength from an image purpoſely repreſented, as inferior to its original, inſtead of being ſtronger or more expreſſive. Thus in Shakeſpeare's beautiful Ode,

> Blow, blow, thou winter wind!
> Thou art not ſo unkind
> As man's ingratitude, &c.

the two images of "winter wind," and "biting froſt," difficult as theſe are often to be ſupported, are yet denominated comparatively light, when compared with the ingratitude and inexcuſable negligence of mankind, the two originals to which theſe

cor-

correſpond. Yet the latter are ſtrengthened by this compariſon; and the whole is incomparably glowing and animated. But a diſcerning reader will take notice, that in every inſtance of this kind, without exception, the original object acquires force, not becauſe the illuſtration is *really* of an inferior nature, but repreſented, though really higher in itſelf, as leſs than the thing to which it is compared, the one loſeth no part of its original force, and the other gains a conſiderable acceſſion. A mind, pained by the recollection of ingratitude, is very forcibly ſet before us when compared with a man feeling in a deſart the blaſting winds, and piercing froſts of winter; but while the conſequences ariſing from theſe laſt, are placed full in our ſight, the anguiſh, excited by the other, is painted with incomparable energy when the poet, perſonifying the biting air, ſays,

Thy *tooth* is not *ſo keen*,
Thou cauſeſt not *that teen*;
Although *thy breath be rude.*

The reader will eaſily ſupply to himſelf many other examples of the ſame kind, to which this obſervation may be applied.

The

The other rule we laid down for rendering images forcible when applied to thoughts in compoſition, viz. that theſe without the embelliſhment of adventitious circumſtances, ſhould be adapted with propriety to their objects, reflection will induce us to follow likewiſe as expedient. It is indeed true, that an image may be thus appropriated to its original without rendering it animated, in the ſame manner as the colour that is ſuited to the complexion of a countenance, may add no diſtinguiſhing vivacity to its expreſſion. With regard to the firſt, however, it is certainly true, that though this correſpondence betwixt an illuſtration and its original pattern may take place (as we have already ſeen) when no degree of ſtrength is communicated to either; yet when it is violated by the introduction of objects foreign to the principal purpoſe, the force of both is conſiderably leſſened, and their impreſſion is rendered leſs durable. The uſe of unappropriated circumſtances in the illuſtration of an important ſentiment, hath the ſame effect upon the mind of a

reader as the "turba verborum," (as Cicero calls it) the multitude of words. The ſtyle of Compoſition is enervated by both. The ſtrength indeed of the image itſelf conſidered apart from the language, depends, no doubt, upon that of the imagination which conceives it. This radical character, therefore, can be altered by no diſpoſition whatever. But the figure of Compoſition here mentioned, when little detached ſtrokes are admitted into it, by carrying the reader's attention away from the principal point, renders that diffuſe which ought to have been cloſely united; and impairs in this manner the effect of the whole.

Theſe obſervations it ought to be remembered, relate wholly to *ſentiments* as energetically conveyed by illuſtrations, in whatever ſpecies of the art theſe may be introduced. With regard to action, (that high kind of it in particular which forms the epopœa) the matter is different. In a narration extremely diverſified, the images drawn promiſcuouſly from all ſources muſt be at the ſame time frequent and various,

as

as the circumſtances direct to which theſe are applied. Amidſt ſuch diverſity, the mind though pleaſed to find in each proportion and ſymmetry, yet requires to be relieved by ſtrokes ſomewhat digreſſive. The force of a deſcription, it is true, may be weakened in a ſmall meaſure by this conduct at the time. But the writer, like an able commander, by extending his powers at ſome times over a larger compaſs than neceſſity might preſcribe, will moſt ſucceſsfully accompliſh his ultimate purpoſe; and if a lively impreſſion is made while theſe are yet diffuſed, it will become irreſiſtible when they are cloſe and concentrated. In an eloquent oration, therefore, and in the higheſt ſpecies of poetry, the diffuſion here cenſured in general, may be judiciouſly adapted to promote a good end. In other branches of the art in general, particularly in the caſe formerly mentioned, it renders, as we have ſeen, Compoſition enervated.

III. We have now endeavoured to ſhow at conſiderable length, what is implied in the epithet *nervous* when viewed as a cha-

racter of Compoſition, what faculty takes cogniſance of it, and by what circumſtances it is conſtituted. Our obſervations on theſe ſubjects will enable us more eaſily to comprehend what remains to be treated; the cauſes that deprive language of its due force, and the moſt proper method of avoiding, or of correcting this weakneſs.

The cauſes that deprive expreſſion of its juſt influence are principally the three following. 1. Improper diffuſion of any kind, but more particularly the too frequent uſe of compounded epithets. 2. The unneceſſary admiſſion of the particles of ſpeech into Compoſition, by whoſe uſe its dignity is loſt, and its impreſſion enfeebled. 3. When neither of theſe ſignatures characteriſe a performance, this defect of ſtrength will ſtill be conſpicuous when either the ſubject in general, or any particular branch of it is diſproportioned to the ability of the writer.

1. We have made uſe of the term *diffuſion* frequently in this ſection, when the connection in which it ſtood muſt have rendered it ſufficiently intelligible. We muſt

muſt here, however, explain it a little more minutely. We commonly obſerve, that the language adopted by a rich imagination is florid, copious, and luxuriant. With the epithet *copious* we aſſociate no idea of enervated diction; but on the contrary, apply it to a work in which every ſucceſſive object is preſented before the mind in its complete proportions; and deem it juſtly, when eminently predominant, to be the moſt perfect character of Compoſition *. We call this the *moſt perfect character* of the art, becauſe it is not, like any of thoſe we have yet examined, required to predominate only or principally in certain ſpecies, but extends univerſally to all. A copious writer, in whatever department of literature his abilities are exerted, is one who does juſtice to every branch of his ſubject; and by ſaying all that can be advanced on it with propriety, fills at the ſame time the ear

* Εσι Λεξις κρατιση πασων, η τις αν εχοι πλειςας αναπαυλας τε και μεταβολας αρμονιας, οταν τυτο μεν εν περιοδω λεγηται, τυτι δε εξω περιοδυ. ΔΙΟΝΥΣ. ΑΛΙΚΑΡ. περι Συνθεσ. Ονομ. c. 28.

with the harmony of his periods, and gives the mind a ſatisfactory view of the theme of which he treats *.

A-kin

---

* The beſt critics, both ancient and modern, concur in recommending the uſe of this numerous diction, particularly to young perſons, as much more eligible than the oppoſite character, even though verging on the extreme of verboſity. The reply of the poet Accius to Pacuvius, who allows his verſification to be numerous and lofty, but cenſured it at the ſame time as defective in elegance, ſets this remark in a very ſtriking light.—" Ita eſt, inquit Accius, uti dicis, neque id ſane me pœnitet, meliora enim fore quæ deinceps ſcribam. Nam quod in pomis eſt, itidem eſſe aiunt in ingeniis, quæ dura & acerba naſcuntur, poſt fiunt mitia & jucunda: ſed quæ gignuntur ſtatim vieta & mollia atque in principio ſunt uvida, non *matura* mox fiunt ſed *putria*. Relinquendum igitur viſum eſt in ingenio quod dies atque ætas mitificet." Aulus Gell. lib. xiii. cap. 2. Quintilian is very explicit on this ſubject. " Facile remedium eſt ubertatis, ſterilia nullo modo vincuntur. Illa mihi in pueris natura nimium ſpei dabit in quâ ingenium judicio preſumitur. Materiam eſſe primam volo vel *abundantiorem* atque *ultra quam oportet fuſam*. Multum inde dement anni, &c." Inſtit. lib. ii. c. 4. The younger Pliny judges in the ſame manner of this character. " Delectare, perſuadere, *copiam* dicendi ſpatiumque deſiderant; relinquere vero aculeum in audientium animis is demum poteſt, qui non pungit ſed inſigit. Non enim amputata oratio & abſciſſa, ſed *lata*, & *magnifica*, & excelſa tonat, fulgurat omnia denique

A-kin to this excellence, however, when ſubſiſting in perfection, is that injudicious diffuſion which we have mentioned as incompatible with vigorous execution *. It will

---

denique perturbat ac miſcet." Epiſt. lib. i. epiſt. xx. A celebrated modern critic conſiders this ſubject very juſtly. His words deſerve attention. " Abſterreo (ſays he) juventutem a brevitate, cujus imitatio facillime ætatem hanc decipit. Juvenili ille brevitatis ſtudio, aridus plerumque & exſuccus ſtylus evadit, nec facile ad *laudatam temperiem* venitur, niſi initio *libertas quædam* & *luxuries* fit quam ætas paulatim depaſcat." Lipſ. Epiſt.

* Cicero himſelf (as we are informed by Tacitus) eſcaped not the cenſure of his contemporaries, on account of this diffuſion in his diction. " Satis conſtat nec Ciceroni obtrectatores defuiſſe quibus inflatus, & tumens, neç ſatis *preſſus*; ſupra modum *exultans* & *ſuperfluens*, & *parum Atticus* videretur. Legiſti utique & Calvi, & Bruti ad Ciceronem miſſas epiſtolas ex quibus facile eſt deprehendere Calvum quidem Ciceroni viſum exſanguem, &c. Rurſumque Ciceronem a Calvo quidem mala audiviſſe tanquam *ſolutum* & *enervem*, a Bruti autem (ut ipſius verbis utar) tanquam fractum atque elumbem." De Orator. Dialog. Later ages, however, have done more juſtice to this admired ancient, whoſe language (if that of any writer ever deſerved this panygeric) unites *the harmony* of the *copious*, with the *energy* of the *conciſe* in Compoſition; and may be denominated in words applied by an elegant poet to a noble river, " *full without overflowing.*" Denham. It is ſomewhat remarkable, that Tacitus

will be immediately underſtood, by comparing theſe characters together, that as the copious in Compoſition is obtained when the full dimenſions of every object are diſplayed, ſo the diffuſe or verboſe takes place in it when in conſequence of an attempt to do more than is neceſſary theſe become diſproportioned. As ſoon as a writer verges from the point of perfection by falling into this error, his diction loſeth a part of its force, even while we are yet inſenſible of the cauſe, or are not ſo much affected as to trace it out with attention. A river, whoſe waters riſe to the higheſt level of its bank on either ſide, is a noble and majeſtic object upon which we dwell with admiration, and whoſe force is augmented in proportion as

himſelf, one of the moſt conciſe writers whom antiquity hath produced, recommends an expreſſion ſomewhat diffuſed, in treating ſerious ſubjects, to be made uſe of, particularly in annals. "Annalium tarda quædam eſt & iners ſcriptura." De Cauſis Corrupt. Eloq. c. 21. By the *tarda* and *iners* is here underſtood, that *copious* expreſſion which is neceſſary to convey ideas clearly to the mind, when many tranſactions muſt be ſuccinctly related.

the

the bounds approach to each other within which it is confined. But when its banks are either broken, or overflowed by the tide, the impetuoſity of the current will be leſſened as its range is extended, and the paſſenger will ſtem or repel it with more facility. Thus as the ſtream is rude and turbulent when too much confined, ſo when taking too wide a compaſs it becomes languid and enervated. The application of this to the preſent ſubject is obvious: the difficulty lies in preſerving the juſt medium.

In order to obtain this point, at leaſt as nearly as poſſible, a writer ought to avoid the *epithetical* ſtyle as it may be termed, which is formed by the uſe of too many *adjectives* in a performance. Theſe, when introduced at all times as if the ſubſtantive ought never to ſtand by itſelf, inſtead of communicating ſtrength to a diſcourſe, render it, on the contrary, inſipid and unmeaning. This is the caſe more particularly when theſe are either general, or are thrown in to fill up a period, and contain uſeleſs repetitions. When Claudian introduceth

duceth his poem on the Rape of Proſerpine, by ſaying,

Inferni raptoris equos, afflataque curru
Sidera Tenario, caliganteſque profundæ
Junonis thalamos, audaci promere cantu
Mens congeſta jubet.——

(words whoſe meaning cannot be adequately conveyed in a tranſlation) the diſcerning reader will be ſenſible, that the ſenſe of this paſſage is hurt by redundant epithets, which enfeeble the expreſſion while they render it inflated *. In the field

---

* The effect of this ſtyle will be more fully comprehended when it is compared either with an expreſſion diveſted of epithet, or with one diſtinguiſhed only by ſuch as have propriety. We ſhall here produce an example of each. Atys recovering from the frenzy in which he had emaſculated himſelf, and reflecting on his condition exclaims with great emotion.

Egone——
Patria, bonis, amicis, genitoribus abero?
Abero foro, paleſtra, ſtudio, gymnaſiis?
Miſer, ah miſer! Quærendum eſt etiam atque etiam anime
Quod enim genus? Figura eſt? Ego numquid abierim?
Ego Mulier?——
Jam, jam dolet quod egi, jam, jam quoque pœnitet.
Catul.

Here the reader will obſerve, that the poet attempts not

field of ſofter deſcription, adjectives applied promiſcuouſly in this manner to fill up a vacuity, as it would ſeem, conſtitute

---

not to heighten the diſtreſs of the ſcene by employing any epithet. Ideas are ſuppoſed to have poured too faſt upon the mind to admit the heightening that ariſeth from this circumſtance. Atys ſpeaks the language of nature, when he draws a compariſon betwixt his paſt and preſent ſtate in a few ſimple words, any of which would be weakened by the moſt forcible epithet that could be applied to it.—An inſtance of the laſt kind we ſhall take from Claudian himſelf, who, in the following beautiful lines, propoſeth his ſubject with admirable ſimplicity, and makes not uſe of one epithet which could, with propriety, be altered or omitted.

Sæpe mihi dubiam traxit ſententia mentem
Curarent ſuperi terras, an nullus ineſſet
Rector, & incerto fluerent mortalia caſu.
Nam cum diſpoſiti quæſiſſem fœdera mundi,
Præſcriptoſque maris fines, annique meatus,
Et lucis, noctiſque vices,—tunc omnia rebar
Conſilio firmata Dei.
Qui variam Phœben alieno juſſerit igne
Compleri, ſolemque ſuo, &c. In Rufin. lib. i. ab init.

This might well paſs as the language of the moſt accompliſhed author of the age of Auguſtus. The whole paſſage breathes the ſame ſpirit. We cannot tranſcribe it here. It is a happy ſpecimen of the manner in which a philoſophical ſubject ought to be propoſed, in a ſtyle preſerving the juſt medium betwixt bombaſt, and meanneſs; redundance, and defect.

the

the flowery, or puerile in Compoſition, which indicates always either a weak, or an immature underſtanding; and which nothing but youth and inexperience renders at any time excuſable.

While we here condemn a ſtyle that is *promiſcuouſly* epithetical, it ought not to be imagined, that this circumſtance ought to be wholly excluded from any ſpecies of Compoſition whatever; or even to be at all times ſparingly introduced. A writer in proſe, can never be ſaid to make uſe of too many adjectives in his work as long as theſe are not redundant, i. e. expreſſive of the ſame thing; but while each conveys a diſtinct idea to the mind, and ſuch as hath ſignificance. In poetry, epithets can never weaken the diction of the writer while theſe are pictureſque. But even in this caſe they fatigue the reader, by recurring upon him too often, and the *glare* of imagery is as apt to hurt a ſuſceptible mind, as the blaze of ſunſhine is to dazzle the eye. A man of genius will ſucceed beſt in rendering his work beautiful in the proper ſenſe of that epithet, who knows

at

at what time it is fit to reſtrain the luxuriance of his imagination; ſince excellence is conſtituted as much by the *judicious diſpoſition* of *colours*, as by their *original invention*.

Compounded epithets are commonly made uſe of to place the original to which they are applied, in a point of view as ſtriking and pictureſque as it can poſſibly admit. For this purpoſe, the internal feelings of the heart, and abſtracted ideas of the underſtanding, are illuſtrated by the union of two ſenſible objects to which we diſcover theſe to have ſome ſtriking reſemblance; and their originals are ſaid to be *imperſonated*, when rendered by an happy application of this kind cogniſable by the ſenſes, and pleaſing to the imagination which is thus powerfully impreſſed. Thus fire-eyed anger, ſmooth-tongued flattery, pale-lip'd ſorrow, roſy-featured eaſe, become much more ſignificant by the combined epithets applied to them here, than by any ſingle adjective of whatever import. Complexion, grace, attitude, and thoſe circumſtances in general that impreſs

the

the organs of ſenſe, enter into the idea here placed before us, and render it at the ſame time lively and permanent. This figure, it muſt be acknowledged, hath been uſed much more frequently, and perhaps with greater ſucceſs, by modern, than by ancient writers of eminence *. It conſtitutes,

* The *learned* reader muſt decide on the truth of this obſervation. Without confirming it, therefore, here by particular examination, which would far exceed the bounds we muſt preſcribe to ourſelves in this note, we ſhall only obſerve, that from the works of Homer, and Pindar, the capital Greek poets, and thoſe of Virgil, the Roman, whoſe writings might afford examples of this character, we find but few inſtances of objects rendered pictureſque by compounded epithet, in proportion at leaſt to thoſe which their ſubjects might have ſuggeſted. The epithets of this kind, applied by Homer to his heroes, are by no means the principal beauties of that immortal work. Theſe are, in truth, neither very characteriſtical, nor much diverſified. Hector is commonly diſtinguiſhed by the two epithets of Κορυθαιολος, and Ανδροφονοιος, i. e. plume-ſhaking, and man-killing; Ulyſſes Πολυτρωπος, ſometimes; and at others, both he and Achilles are diſtinguiſhed by the general epithet of Διος. Agamemnon is called, with propriety enough, Ευρυκρειων, wide-commanding. Even Achilles himſelf, is moſt commonly denominated Ποδυσωκυς, ſwift-footed;

tutes, however, when *placed with propriety*, one of the greateſt beauties of poetry, (to which art it is peculiarly appropriated) and ſuch as diſtinguiſheth genius in its greateſt eminence. But when in conſequence of an affectation to attain this excellence at all times, it is applied indiſcriminately to every object, its ſtrength is impaired by this injudicious uſe of it; and figures which would have commanded admiration when contemplated apart, at proper intervals from each other, eſcape even obſervation by being thus preſented in a promiſcuous aſſemblage.

2. As Compoſition is thus weakened by diffuſion and redundance of epithet, ſo

---

footed; which is often repeated, when the reader might expect that a much more forcible and picturesque phraſe ſhould be ſubſtituted in its room. There are, however, no doubt, ſome epithets wonderfully ſtriking and happy in the Iliad. Pindar has ſome of the ſame kind, (examples of which cannot be ſelected here) but fewer, upon the whole, than it might be ſuppoſed that ſo great an imagination would have ſupplied. The caſe of Virgil we have already conſidered. It is probable, that the ancient poets in general, avoided making uſe of compounded epithets, as inconſiſtent with that *ſimplicity* of expreſſion which they endeavour at all times to preſerve.

it

it ſuffers in the ſame manner by the too frequent uſe of expletives, and of thoſe monoſyllabical particles which are employed to connect the parts of a ſentence together. The effect of the firſt mentioned is moſt conſpicuous in poetry, particularly when rhyme is adopted. In this caſe, the words *do*, *will*, *ſhall*, *have*, *had*, &c. applied to the correſponding tenſes of verbs, render a poem like a pedant, at once ſtiff and unedifying, weak and affected. Pope at the ſame time exemplifies this fault, and expoſeth the effect of it.

Expletives their feeble aïd *do* join. Eſſ. on Crit.

But let it be remembered, that this remark neither extends to dramatic poetry, nor to any ſpecies of Compoſition that approacheth to the looſer ſtyle of converſation. In theſe the expletives abovementioned have not only propriety, but ſignificance likewiſe in many caſes; becauſe inſtead of being introduced to fill up a ſentence or a line, the whole force of it often reſts upon the emphaſis with which ſome of them are pronounced. When Iago ſays to Bianca, in the Moor of Venice,

——— Guiltineſs
Will ſpeak, though tongues were out of uſe.

Lodovico to Othello, in the ſame play, when he had killed his wife,

You *ſhall* cloſe priſoner reſt.

The king of Denmark to Polonius, in Hamlet,

ſomething's in his ſoul,
O'er which his melancholy ſits in brood,
And I *do* doubt the hatch and the diſcloſe
Will be ſome danger.

In theſe, and in many other examples of the ſame kind, an emphaſis is laid on the expletive *ſhall*, *will*, *do*, which thus *give* energy to diſcourſe, inſtead of *leſſening* it, as in the firſt inſtance.

Proſe Compoſition is weakened by nothing more effectually, than by the inconſiderate uſe of little particles, and monoſyllables. Theſe are like tools, which, when applied however apparently diminutive to a ſolid body, deſtroy its conſiſtence, and break it into fragments. The little copulative AND in particular, when too frequently repeated, tends greatly to enervate a ſentiment, and to deſtroy the har-

mony of a period. On this account, the greateſt maſters of Compoſition frequently drop it altogether, when the ſenſe is not injured by the omiſſion; judging that the words expreſſive of certain ideas, when placed together in one view, have much more force without the repetition of this copulating particle, than with it.—" Non omnes (ſays the Roman orator) eos contemnunt de quibus male exiſtimant. Nam quos improbos, maledicos, fraudulentos putant, &c. eos haud contemnunt quidem, ſed de iis male exiſtimant." Cicer. De Offic. The reader will obſerve, that the whole ſentence is much more expreſſive when the terms *improbos*, &c. ſtand alone, than if the particle *et* had been applied to each of them, which, though an addition ſeemingly inſignificant, would have impaired its ſtrength as well as harmony *.—We avoid enlarging on this head,

* In the ſame manner our author, ſpeaking a little after of the objects that give agreeable and painful ſenſations, ſays, " Voluptates, blandiſſimæ Dominæ, ſepe majores partes animi a virtute detorquent; & Dolorum

head, that our remarks may not be deemed too *minute*. Such as have been made, the ſubject appears not only to ſuggeſt as natural, but to demand as neceſſary.

3. We proceed, therefore, to obſerve, in the laſt place, that the cauſe moſt univerſally productive of an enfeebled expreſſion, is a diſproportion of the writer's abilities,

---

lorum cum admoventur faces, præter modum plerique exterrentur.—Vita, Mors, Divitiæ, Paupertas, omnes homines vehementiſſime permovent." Id. ibid. Here the ſentiment is much more nervouſly expreſſed without the repetition of the copulative *et* adjected to the words *vita*, &c. than with this addition. The beſt claſſical writers avoid likewiſe at ſome times making uſe of the particle *aut* (or) in the compariſon of things with each other. The repetition of the relative referring to a former perſon, renders a ſentence incomparably more elegant and forcible. Thus Cicero, again, ſpeaking of juſtice in its moſt enlarged acceptation, tells us.—" Nemo enim juſtus eſſe poteſt qui mortem, qui dolorem, qui exilium, qui egeſtatem timet." Id. ibid. This manner of repreſenting the matter has a much greater efficacy, than if our author had ſaid, as an inferior writer would have done, " aut dolorem, aut exilium," &c. The reader thrown into this track of obſervation, may extend it to many more inſtances than can be enumerated here, particularly in the Engliſh language, which abounds with monoſyllables.

either to his ſubject in general, or to any particular branch of it.

When a theme in general demands more vigorous execution than that to which its author is adequate, the defect of ſtrength is as conſpicuous to a diſcerning eye, as the difference is to all betwixt the man who ſupports a conſiderable weight without difficulty, and him who heaves it from the earth with trepidation, totters in his gait every moment, and ſtaggers with relaxed ſinews, to the place at which it is to be depoſited. The parts of a ſubject, when this is the caſe, commonly want that juſt coherence which conſtitutes a whole proportioned and conſiſtent: the enlargements are either foreign or trifling; and thoſe branches which are of leaſt utility, and require the eaſieſt exertion, lead the reader to form an expectation both from the author's promiſe, and from his execution, which, when brought to the trial, he is unable to gratify.

But as the defect of intellectual energy is thus rendered perfectly conſpicuous when

when a theme is too great or comprehenſive for the mind that contemplates it, ſo it often happens, that when no ſuch defect takes place in general, yet a writer will diſappoint expectation, not only in the delineation of a particular part, or in the uſe of a diſproportioned illuſtration, but even in his manner of treating a certain branch (perhaps an important one) of his ſubject, demanding no greater proportion of mental ability than others to which he hath been found adequate. The firſt mentioned of theſe, a good-natured reader will readily excuſe. It is the characteriſtic of every performance, and ariſeth from the imperfection of human nature. Blemiſhes of this kind are, perhaps, even neceſſary to recommend the beauties of a performance, as the ſhades of a picture ſet off its graces to advantage. We may at leaſt obſerve, that a *perfect work* (could ſuch a one be produced) would preſent a very unintereſting, if not a diſagreeable object to that part of mankind, whoſe enjoyment, if traced to its ſource in the pe-

ruſal of a performance, ariſeth principally from the gratification of malevolence.

With regard to the other inſtance of diſproportioned vigour, that which appears in an author's way of treating a particular queſtion, or branch of his diſcourſe, in which he exerts not the ſame ſtrength, either of ſentiment or expreſſion, that he diſplays upon every other topic; though it is a weakneſs much leſs excuſable than the former, eſpecially when ariſing from want of attention; yet moſt commonly it is only an indication that the mind of the writer is fitted to think with more perſpicacity, and to expreſs its ideas with greater energy, upon ſome topics than upon others, which in the diſcuſſion of a comprehenſive plan will unavoidably fall out. That the operation of both caſes may be prevented as much as poſſible, a man ought to reflect in the firſt caſe, that in beſtowing leſs attention on one part of his ſubject than on another, he does injuſtice to his reader, whoſe judgment of its importance may be very different from his own; and in the laſt he will moſt ſucceſsfully

rectify

rectify this inaptitude, by ſupplying in attention what he may want in natural propenſity, and his thoughts, like a river diverted into an artificial bed, though diverged at firſt with difficulty from their native direction, will at laſt run freely in the channel that is opened to receive them.

IV. From the preceding obſervations on nervous Compoſition, as relating to ſentiment, expreſſion, and illuſtration; on the means that conſtitute this character of the art, and on the cauſes that deprive language of its energy, from theſe one truth will obviouſly appear to reſult;—that the firſt thing neceſſary to produce vigorous execution, is a perfect acquaintance with the ſubject of which we treat. There are, it is true, performances in whoſe compoſition there is apparently great ſtrength, though the authors are found upon cloſer examination to have taken very defective views of their ſubjects. But when this is the caſe, it is uſually the words or ſounds, not the ſenſe imparted in theſe, that ſeem to have emphaſis. Language may, no

doubt, be ſwelled out to ſuch an expreſſion when the thought is wholly ſuperficial; and, indeed, when the mind is conſcious of a defect in ſentiment, it naturally attempts to compenſate this loſs by far-fetched ornaments, and ſtrenuous aſſertion. Men of imagination, in whom the faculty of underſtanding is either originally weak, or who have formed a very inadequate eſtimate of their ſubject, generally fall into the *declamatory* ſtyle, which though inconſiſtent with nervous Compoſition *in reality*, admits it greatly *in appearance*. Thoſe on the other hand, whoſe view of their theme is equally incomplete, but who either *avoid* declamation, or *cannot* adopt it, bewilder themſelves and their readers in the labyrinth of obſcurity, and loſe ſight of *truth* in the purſuit of *diſtinction*. If it is true (as we have endeavoured to evince through the whole of this ſection), that the character here examined can only be ſaid to obtain when the thought and the diction ſupport and coaleſce with each other, we can never aſcribe it to any production in which the former is ſuperficial.

The

The *declamatory*, and the *nervous* therefore, in the ſtrict ſenſe of the laſt epithet, are incompatible. The laſt-mentioned writers again, who "blunder about a meaning" which they cannot make out, far from deſerving that the epithet *nervous* ſhould be applied to their compoſition, diſtinguiſh it properly by no character but that of obſcurity. Energy of expreſſion is a ſecondary quality of the art here examined, derived from ſtrength of ſentiment, and always accompanying it. It is only when an author thoroughly comprehends the ſeries of thoughts paſſing ſucceſſively before him, that he will convey theſe with that maſculine force which an idea ſtrongly conceived will infuſe, as it were, into his diction. Otherwiſe it may be tumid, ornamented, or diffuſe; but never maſterly and invigorated.

Cui *lecta potenter* erit *res*,
Nec *facundia* deſeret hunc, neque lucidus ordo. HOR.

2. Some critics are of opinion, that the ſtyle of Compoſition in order to be denominated *nervous*, ought to be ſo conciſe and *cloſe* (if we may thus expreſs it) as to contain

contain juſt the neceſſary words that are expreſſive of certain ideas, and no more. Such appears to be the meaning affixed to it by the detractors of Cicero, (mentioned in the celebrated Dialogue on the Corruption of Eloquence above referred to, when they accuſe him of being defective in the *preſſus* and *atticus* *, as they denominate it. This manner is no doubt highly eligible when obtained in perfection. There are, however, two *capital* errors into which an author may be led by

---

* The ſtyle here characteriſed is probably termed *atticus* from the peculiar character of Demoſthenical eloquence, which is diſtinguiſhed by an expreſſion at the ſame time remarkably conciſe, and happily appropriated. Ο δε ΔΗΜΟΣΘΕΝΙΚΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ ευτονος τη Φρασει, κεκραμενος τοις ηθεσι, και λεξεως εκλογη κεκοσμημενος, και χρωμενος ταξει τη κατα το συμφερον και μετα τυ σεμνυ την χαριν εχων και συνεχης· οις μαλιϛα δικαϛαι κατεχονται. ΔΙΟΝΥΣ. ΑΡΧΑΙΩΝ ΚΡΙΣ. Cicero looked upon the language of Demoſthenes as ſo remarkably energetical, that he characteriſeth it by the ſingle, but nervous epithet VIM. "Suavitatem Iſocrates, ſubtilitatem Lyſias, acumen Hyperides, ſonitum Æſchines, VIM Demoſthenes habuit." De Orat. lib. iii.

attempt-

attempting it without proper attention;—that of *harſhneſs*, and of *obſcurity*.

The harſh in Compoſition is conſtituted by words that have ſignificance thrown together without harmony. This happens either when there is no proper affinity betwixt the words employed in a diſcourſe, and the ſenſe conveyed in it; or when the ſtructure of periods is perplexed and diſſonant. Language may be ſaid to want a juſt correſpondence with the ſentiment (ſuppoſing this laſt to be ſtrongly conceived) when an attempt to maintain the harmony that ought to ſubſiſt betwixt theſe is carried too far; and by leaving out, as ſuperfluous, words that give ſoftneſs and elegance to expreſſion, an author collects together a ſet of unmuſical phraſes, by which the ear is ſhocked, and the ſenſe injured. We muſt not, however, ſo far miſtake the meaning of the term *harſh*, when applied to language, as to confound it with a *rough*, or even *rude* and *obſolete* phraſeology. The ſenſe, particularly in a well-wrought deſcription, may often require rough ſounds to be aſſembled, which

a juſt

a juſt diſpoſition will render harmonious *. Even rude and obſolete expreſſion in the ſame

---

* Every reader knows, that an aſſemblage of this kind conſtitutes one of the principal beauties of poetic expreſſion.

Una euruſque, notuſque ruunt, creberque procellis
Africus——

and again,

In ſegetem veluti cum flamma furentibus auſtris
Incidit, & rapidus montano flumine torrens
Sternit agros, &c.

Theſe deſcriptions, and many others of the ſame kind, far from being harſh or ungrateful, are, on the contrary, remarkably harmonious. The language of Spenſer in the ſame manner, and that of Taſſo, though rendered *obſolete* in ſome meaſure by time, are ſtill admired as elegant and melodious. Shall I be pardoned by the reader for giving an example of *harſh* Compoſition from the work of a modern author, whoſe writings in general are the ſtandards of harmonious expreſſion, as well as of philoſophical ſentiment?—Homer, deſcribing the preparations for the funeral of Patroclus, tells us, that the party ſent at a diſtance to collect wood for the pile, led their mules with difficulty over broken rocks, and precipices. The line

Πολλα δ'αναντα, καταντα, παραντα τε δ'οχμια τ'ηλθον.

hath great poetic beauty, but the tranſlation, in conſequence of too cloſe an imitation of it, is unmuſical, and even grating to the ear.

O'er hills, o'er dales, o'er crags, o'er rocks, they go.

There is ſomething ſtiff and affected in this line, to which

ſame manner we may cenſure as the effect of defective education, or may conſider as the ſtyle of an uninformed age; but in theſe likewiſe, there may be *ruſticity* without that *diſcordance*, to which laſt, juſt obſervation, of whatever kind, can have no affinity.

Harſh diction, occaſioned thus at ſome times by the diſcordance of words to the ſenſe conveyed in theſe, is, however, moſt commonly the effect of ill-conſtructed periods. We pronounce expreſſion to have this diſagreeable peculiarity, when the members of a ſentence are broken and diſjointed, inſtead of forming a conſiſtent body; when there is a viſible conſtraint in the choice, as well as diſpoſition of words, and when the concluſion of the period is ungratefully abrupt. Some of

---

which the original by no means correſponds. Again,

Jumping high o'er the ſhrubs of the rough mound,
Rattle the clattering cars, and the ſhockt axles bound.

The firſt of theſe lines is pictureſque, but the laſt is particularly harſh, and the deſcription is overwrought in it. A writer fond of *conceit* might ſay here, that the ear of the reader is as much *ſhocked* by this collection of ſounds, as the poet repreſents the axles of the chariot to have been.

theſe circumſtances, it is true, may characteriſe verboſe, as well as conciſe Compoſition. A long-winded ſentence may be broken, and rendered diſſonant more readily than a ſhort one, which, conſiſting of fewer parts, may be regulated, one may ſay, with greater facility. But this is the caſe only when ſtyle, though upon the whole deſerving the character of *conciſe*, remote as it muſt be from the extreme of improper diffuſion, is equally ſo from that of deficiency. It is when a cloſe and contracted manner is ſtudied, that the words, like the jagged points of a rock, unconnected with each other, give the whole Compoſition this moſt unfavourable aſpect. That harſhneſs in a more particular manner which is occaſioned by the abrupt concluſion of periods, is always originally the conſequence of ſtudying brevity too univerſally, and depriving language of its proper ornaments.—The other error into which the affectation of too conciſe an expreſſion may lead an author, that of *obſcurity*, we have conſidered ſo fully in other parts of this work, as to ſuperſede

the

the uſe of an enlargement here *. In order to avoid both the faults we have thus pointed out, as ariſing from affected brevity, a writer ought to weigh the ſentiments or arguments ſuggeſted to him together, ſo as to judge of their comparative energy, and of the words adapted with greateſt propriety to each. He who deſires to form himſelf in early life to a nervous ſtyle of Compoſition, will moſt probably obtain his purpoſe by taking a thought that hath remarkable energy from ſome work in which this character predominates; and dropping the words of his original, by endeavouring to expreſs it in his own. When he compares his own attempt with the pattern imitated, he will judge not only of its general conformity to the ſtandard, but of the cauſe from which a diſproportion proceeds. As ſoon as this is detected, it may be eradicated with facility, not in the ſingle inſtance alone, but in all caſes without exception, where a ſimilar ſtrain of Com-

* See ſect. ii. and ſect. iii. &c. of this volume.

poſition

poſition is required to prevail. The obſervation of this rule tends no doubt to improve, when properly applied, every character of the art. Yet it is peculiarly adapted to that which we have conſidered in this ſection, becauſe a nervous manner is of all others the moſt univerſally affected; and at the ſame time in conſequence of the faults allied to it, the moſt difficult to be obtained.

3. The laſt method we ſhall mention of giving this maſterly character to Compoſition, is that of carrying on a *well-conducted climax* in any branch of it whatever. By a *climax*, whether in the language or ſentiment of a performance, we underſtand a gradual progreſſion from the leſs to the more animated, as the objects which the mind contemplates grow in their importance, until the faculty that ſcanned a few general principles with indifference, fixes with cloſe attention on the forcible and intereſting. As every ſubject ought to be treated in this manner, that it may make a ſuitable impreſſion on the power to which it is addreſſed, a ſimilar

pro-

procedure in conducting the members of a ſentence to its concluſion muſt naturally be productive of a correſponding effect. This conduct is principally requiſite when the motives uſed to enforce any propoſition are placed before the mind in one comprehenſive ſummary; as it is here neceſſary to concentrate their whole force in *one point*, whoſe energy may be thus rendered irreſiſtibly penetrating. The effect of ſuch conduct will be felt moſt powerfully by trying an example.—"Idemque (ſays the Roman orator) cum cœlum, terras, maria, rerumque omnium naturam perſpexerit, eaque unde generata quo recurrant, quando, quomodo obitura, quid in iis mortale & caducum, quid divinum æternumque ſit viderit. *Ipſumque* ea moderantem & regentem pæne prehenderit; *ſeſeque* non unis circumdatum mœnibus, popularem alicujus definiti loci; ſed *civem totius mundi* quaſi *unius urbis* agnoverit:—in *hac magnificentia rerum*; atque in *hoc conſpectu & cognitione naturæ*;—DII immortales!—Quam *ipſe ſe* noſcet!" De Legib. lib. i.—The gradation here

from leſs to more intereſting circumſtances, and the correſponding emphaſis communicated to the diction as the author proceeds, can eſcape the obſervation of no reader who is able to comprehend an original which any tranſlation muſt greatly injure.

Thus we have attempted to render the reader acquainted with the proper meaning and ſphere of this diſtinguiſhed character of Compoſition, with the cauſes that produce, with the *faults* allied to, and with the means of obtaining it. We ſhall conclude with obſerving, as the reſult of all,—that however eminent any characteriſtic of the art may be, a writer of good ſenſe will take care never to give ſuch ſtrenuous and cloſe attention to that one, as to overlook others of conſiderable, perhaps of equal importance. In the purſuit, therefore, of *ſtrength*, he will be careful to preſerve *harmony* of diction. Theſe, as we have ſeen in many inſtances, are perfectly compatible. The excluſion of the laſt from Compoſition can be compenſated by the attainment of no excellence whatever.

SEC-

SECTION VII.

Of correct Compoſition.

NO branch of the various and comprehenſive ſubject of the preſent work opens to us a more extenſive field of obſervation, than that with which we here propoſe to ſum up our remarks on the principal characters of the ſtyle of Compoſition. Every writer deſires to render his performance correct; and his attention to this circumſtance is proportioned to the ſollicitude with which he wiſhes to obtain unallayed approbation. The purpoſe to which the *critical art* hath been principally ſubſervient in all ages, is that of correcting the faults, of pointing out the defects, and of retrenching the ſuperfluities of inaccurate Compoſition; by which means, when unwarped by paſſion or prejudice to ſelfiſh gratification, it hath contributed eminently to reform the manners, and promote the happineſs of mankind. The truth of this obſervation we ſhall illuſtrate at greater length, when we come to trace

the connection of both arts with each other, and to ſhow the tendency of each.

When we conſider the moſt correct performance in this manner, as that in which the neareſt approach is made to perfection, the animadverſions of ſome men muſt appear to be ill-founded, who affirm, that too much attention may be beſtowed on this circumſtance; that it is often unfavourable to the exertions of genius; and that *exquiſite beauty*, though frequently characteriſing works whoſe compoſition is *unequal*, yet is ſeldom to be met with in thoſe more chaſtiſed productions, where the reader finds nothing to cenſure. We ſhall here begin with laying before the reader the reaſons that are urged on both ſides of this queſtion, we ſhall then endeavour to ſhow what degree of attention this character of the art neceſſarily claims, and in what caſes an author *ought* perhaps to relax in it;—ſome obſervations (as uſual) on the moſt proper methods of rendering Compoſition correct, will conclude the ſection.

I. It is almoſt needleſs to obſerve here, that the term *correct*, when applied to this art, ſuggeſts a negative rather than poſitive deſcription of any kind. It implies, indeed, the abſence of faults, but not the predominance of diſtinguiſhing excellence. At the ſame time this epithet contains nothing in its meaning, either exclusive of ſuch excellence, or incompatible with it. A work eminently characteriſed by every ſpecies of beauty, may be likewiſe correct. But it is equally true, that a performance in which we find little to cenſure will always deſerve this character, though its excellence may be at moſt but *ſecondary*.

It deſerves more particular notice, that this phraſe, when applied to the various parts, or *members* of Compoſition (as theſe may be denominated), hath a more determinate ſignification than when viewed with relation to the art in general, and ſuch as is poſitive and direct. Thus by a ſeries of *corrected ſentiment*, we underſtand thoughts that riſe naturally out of a ſubject conveying diſtinct ideas to the mind;

and placed in ſuch exact diſpoſition, as that the ſenſe muſt be injured by altering their arrangement. By a correct *image* in the ſame manner, we mean one that is appropriated to its original pattern, whoſe parts correſpond exactly to thoſe of this object; to which a retrenchment would give defect, and an addition ſuperfluity. Correct diction is that which being both grammatically accurate, and diſtinguiſhed by propriety, obtains at once the approbation of the leſs intelligent, and eſcapes the cenſure of the critic.

Theſe remarks on *correct* Compoſition, lead us naturally to take notice of another circumſtance by which it is diſcriminated from thoſe which have formerly been enumerated. It is, that the preſent character can be applied more properly than any other to one member or ingredient of the art, though wholly excluded from the reſt. We have already ſeen, that the ſublime, and the nervous in particular, never take place unleſs when there is a concurrence of ſtrong or exalted ſentiment, with vigorous, or elevated expreſſion.

This

This holds true likewiſe of the other criteria we have examined, which communicate a certain *colour*, as it may be called, or peculiarity to language. But no ſuch combination is indiſpenſably requiſite to conſtitute the preſent character, which may be even *perfect* in its kind, though wholly confined to one object. Thus it will be acknowledged, that the ſentimental part of a performance may be correct while the diction is inaccurate; this laſt chaſtiſed again when the former is defective; and an image may be fitted to its original with ſufficient accuracy, when both the others lie open to cenſure. This circumſtance it is, that renders Compoſition perfectly chaſtiſed, ſo rare and difficult an attainment. Thought and expreſſion forming here no neceſſary combination, as in the former inſtances *, cannot be made *equally* correct without the cloſeſt attention to both. Yet a want of either, far from being of ſmall conſequence, is a capital defect.

From the view we have here exhibited of the preſent ſubject, we may, without

* See ſect. iv. and ſect. v. paſſ.

difficulty, account for that deſire which hath obtained among authors in every civilized ſtate of ſociety, to diſtinguiſh their performances by the prevalence of this criteria in its utmoſt extent; as being ſenſible, that though the term *correct* may be applied without impropriety to one ingredient of Compoſition, excluſively of others; yet that work comes neareſt to perfection, in which its influence is moſt univerſal.

The reaſons, therefore, that are urged for rendering Compoſition, in the full meaning of the word, as correct as poſſible, are ſo obvious and ſtriking, as to require no particular enumeration; and far leſs any long enlargement. It is by means of this character alone that a work, in whoſe conduct there may be very conſiderable ingenuity, affords the mind a rational entertainment, inſtead of being laid aſide as containing the ebullitions of extravagant imagination, reduced into no form, and exciting the diſguſt of a ſenſible reader, by the frequent violation of decorum and of truth. It is (as we have already ſeen) the

the peculiar province of underſtanding to beſtow this laſt heightening on a production *, the maturity, as well as comprehenſion of which power, is indicated in proportion as this chaſtiſed manner prevails in one branch of the art, or takes place equally in all. There are, indeed, certain deviations from propriety rendered excuſable by various circumſtances, as the age in which an author wrote, his time of life (particularly if poſſeſſed of extenſive imagination), the nature of his theme, as demanding materials greatly diverſified; and, finally, the imperfection of the human mind, extending neceſſarily to its production of what kind ſoever. This laſt cauſe muſt be allowed by all to have univerſal influence; and thoſe who have leaſt of it themſelves, are commonly readieſt to conſider it as a plea for the greateſt number of defects.

Theſe cauſes, however, operate only within certain ſpheres, and there are boundaries (if we may thus expreſs it) ſet to

* See vol. I. ſect. ii.

their

their dominion, beyond which we permit it not, at any time, to be extended. Thus a writer, whom we know to have lived in a barbarous age, will be readily excuſed on this account for falling into a rude and ill-adapted phraſeology. But ſhould this be adduced as a plea for that obſcurity which ariſeth from perplexed conſtruction, or the ſimplicity that is violated by inflated deſcription, a ſenſible critic would reply, that theſe are faults derived, not from the manner of an age, however uncultivated, but from a defect of the author's underſtanding. This, he will ſay, muſt have ſuggeſted to him if at all adequate to any ſphere of Compoſition, that perſpicuity requires the members of a ſentence to correſpond with each other; and that the ſimplicity of language is violated, when it is ſwelled out with epithets which injure the ſenſe, inſtead of adding to its ſignificance. The florid, the luxuriant, the digreſſive, and even the flowery (of all others the leaſt agreeable manner), are likewiſe excuſed as ſoon as we know the youth of the author; and are contemplated as the firſt crop of

a young

a young tree, whoſe bloſſoms, though not hardening into conſiſtence at that time, yet promiſe a rich crop of fruit when the plant hath arrived at maturity. But as we are induced to overlook the preſent in this inſtance, from our expectation of the future, the plea ſo ſucceſsfully employed in the caſes above-mentioned, would be adduced to no purpoſe in favour of a frigid, trifling, or inſipid production, which affording neither immediate gratification, nor a proſpect of future emolument, would be rejected as wholly unworthy our attention. Finally, when we diſcover great maſtery and preciſion to take place in the general conduct of a work (eſpecially when conſiſting of very complicated parts), the imperfection of human nature will lead the more diſcerning part of mankind not only to excuſe *great inequalities* in an author's Compoſition, but even to conſider the *leſs* as compenſated fully by the *more material*, when the former is *uniformly* defective and inadequate. But this plea can never be admitted, unleſs when there is a greater proportion of excellence than of

defect,

defect, upon the whole, in a performance. It would otherwiſe be preferred to no other purpoſe, than that of exciting indignation.

Correct Compoſition, therefore, as it renders at all times that work the moſt valuable of which it is moſt univerſally characteriſtical; ſo within certain limits no atonement can be made for its deficiency. Thoſe, however, who appear to have examined this matter with cloſe attention are of opinion, that, excellent as it is, the deſire of obtaining this character in perfection may be carried ſo far as to produce bad conſequences, and ſuch as are detrimental in particular to authors of the moſt diſtinguiſhed eminence *. Theſe repreſent this taſk of correcting every inaccuracy, not only as painfully minute, and diſagreeable to a man of genius †, but they obſerve,

* "Sunt ſcriptores (ſays the learned and elegant Eraſmus) qui ſemper aliquid addentes, adimentes, immutantes; & hoc ipſo *maxime* peccantes, quia *nihil peccare* conantur." Chil. i. cent. 3.

† Ovid is very honeſt in making an acknowledgment of this kind.

Seepe

obſerve, likewiſe, that there is a certain point beyond which this affectation of chaſtiſing every part to the laſt degree of perfection may injure Compoſition, but can be of no uſe to it *. They repreſent it as an aſſiduity, by which the vigour and energy of ſentiment is drained away,

---

Sæpe aliquod verbum cupiens mutare, relinquo:
Judicium vires deſtituuntque meum.
Sæpe piget, (quid enim dubitem tibi vera fateri)
Corrigere, & longi ferre laboris onus:
Scribentem juvat ipſe favor, minuitque laborem,—&c.
Corrigere at res eſt tanto magis ardua, quanto
Magnus Ariſtarcho major Homerus erat.
Sic animum lento curarum frigore lædit,
Ut cupidi ſi quis fræna retentat equi.—
De Pont. lib. Ep. 9.

This, it muſt be owned, is the language of indolence, but it is an indolence of which *imagination* is the parent. A heavy author would never talk in this manner.

* "Cum perfectum abſolutumque ſit opus, non *ſplendeſcit* lima, ſed *atteritur*." Plin. Epiſt. lib. v. Epiſt. 11. Dionyſius cenſures Iſocrates for an attention of this kind. Ισοκρατης ωανηγυρικωτερος εϛι μαλλον η δικανικωτερος. Εχει δε τον κοσμον μετ' ενεργειας, &c. Ου μεν αγωνιϛικος ωεριγραφων δε την απαγγελιαν τοις ωεριοδοις ολως μεσοτητα σωφρονιζων λιτοτητι, το δε λιτον εξαιρων. Και αυτε μαλιϛα ζηλωτεον την τε των ονοματων συνεχειαν, &c. T ΑΡΧΑΙΩΝ ΕΞΕΤΑΣ.

as it were, and tells us, that a work thus elaborately purified, is like a body whoſe richeſt blood, and moſt invigorating juices, are ſtrained off by the phyſician, who leaves it an heavy, and inanimated carcaſs *. With regard to the ſtyle of Compoſition, it is ſaid to be rendered, by attempting to deprive it of every ſuperfluity, either ſo dry and inſipid as to be read with liſtleſs inattention †; or ſo ſcholaſtic and grammatical as to ſhow that elegance is ſacrificed to preciſion.

But theſe, though errors that ought to be avoided carefully by thoſe who would be maſters of the art, are yet by no means

---

* "Et ipſa emendatio finem habet. Sunt enim qui ad omnia ſcripta tanquam vitioſa redeant, & quaſi nihil fas ſit rectum eſſe quod primum eſt melius exiſtiment quicquid eſt aliud, idque faciunt quoties librum in manus reſumpſerint ſimiles medicis, etiam *integra ſecantibus*. Accidit itaque ut *cicatricoſa* ſint, & *exſanguia*, & *cura pejora*." Quint. lib. x.

† "Non minus non ſervat modum, qui *infra* rem, quam qui ſupra: qui adſtrictius, quam qui effuſius dicit. Itaque audis frequenter ut illud immodice & redundanter, ita hoc *jejune* & *infirme*. Alius *exceſſiſſe* materiam, alius dicitur *non impleſſe*. *Æque* uterque, ſed ille *imbecillitati*, hic viribus peccat." Plin. Epiſt. lib. i. Epiſt. 20.

the

the principal faults into which authors of the firſt rank are apt to be led, by making too much uſe of the *file* (as it may be termed) in order to give the laſt poliſh to their pieces. It is ſaid, with ſome truth, that though in conſequence of this practice a performance becomes, upon the whole, leſs apt to excite an unpleaſing ſenſation at any time, than when it obtains not; yet it ceaſeth likewiſe, by this means, to excite ſo much admiration *. In order, therefore, to render a work faultleſs, it is deprived of *capital excellencies*; and a genius which might have gleaned many a wild, though exquiſite beauty, had it been

* Shall I offend any *rational* admirer of Pope (ſays a critic well qualified to judge of his ſubject) by remarking that ſome juvenile deſcriptive poems of Milton (l'Allegro, Il Penſeroſo, and Ode on the Nativity) as well as his Latin elegies, are of a ſtrain far more exalted than any the former author can boaſt. Let me add at the ſame time, what juſtice obliges me to add, that they are far more *incorrect*. For in the very Ode before us (that on the Nativity) occur one or two paſſages, that are puerile and affected to a degree not to be paralleled in the *purer*, but *leſs elevated* compoſitions of Pope. Eſſay on the Writings and Genius of Pope, p. 40.

left

left to expatiate on the common of nature; yet like a bird taken from this field, and confined within a circumſcribed and ſcanty ſpace, it ranges among a few objects, inſtead of viewing an exhauſtleſs variety, and finds its wings every moment repelled by the bars of its dungeon. It is worth while to enquire what truth there is in this obſervation, as this will introduce a branch of our ſubject not yet touched upon, how far the deſire of rendering their performances *correct* ought to operate on writers of exalted genius.

This great and extraordinary quality, conſtituted by the union of the ſuperior faculties in vigorous exertion, is yet, no doubt, diſtinguiſhed principally by ſtrokes derived from imagination. On this account it is, that as the native bias of this power directs it to form elevated, forcible, pictureſque, or beautiful imitations of the objects that paſs before it, we denominate the genius of the writer to be ſublime, vigorous, animated, or elegant. The inventive faculty, therefore, in general determines our application of the word Genius

to any mind; while the character belonging to it is fixed by that modification which we perceive to take place. From theſe principles it naturally follows, that the higheſt walk of genius is that in which imagination makes the greateſt and moſt aſtoniſhing exertions. But in what circumſtances are theſe exertions made? Is it not neceſſary for this purpoſe, that the power above mentioned ſhould be permitted to take cognizance of a ſeries of objects, at once great and diverſified; and that a field, proportioned to this diverſity, ſhould be opened for its range, as they will thus be obſerved to the greateſt advantage?

That both ought to take place here will not be diſputed. It remains, therefore, that we enquire by what means the range of imagination is moſt contracted, and the feweſt objects preſented to its cognizance. Both theſe are conſequences of attending cloſely to the circumſtance of *ſtrict propriety* in every idea, and of beſtowing on it not the richeſt colouring, but ſuch as is

moſt decent and ſuitable. We do not deny that this choice is made by the underſtanding, and that whatever receives its approbation, will be conſidered as the fitteſt and leaſt exceptionable. We mean only to obſerve, that in conſequence of the ſevere inveſtigation carried on by this faculty, many objects will be rejected as unfit, which might have pleaſed by being decorated with certain admirable graces; and what theſe obtain by this intervention in point of accuracy, they loſe in wildneſs, variety, and grandeur. This, upon reflection, will appear not to be an adventitious but neceſſary effect, ariſing from the ends which the powers here mentioned propoſe ſeparately to bring about, fancy attracted always by *beauty*, and judgment directed by *propriety*. Theſe ought, no doubt, to be generally united in ordinary caſes. Elegance is improved by regularity; but the wild and luxuriant require it to be violated. We are pleaſed when cultivated incloſures, laid out with all the improvements of art, terminate with the proſpect

of

of broken rocks, immenſe mountains, or ſtupendous precipices; in the ſame manner as we prefer the irregular grandeur of a Gothic pile, to the moſt perfect plan of modern architecture, executed with ſo much judgment as to preſent few, or no objects, that require to be rectified. The protuberances in both are violations of *correct deſign*. But they are ſuch violations as no man, poſſeſſed of the leaſt perception of beauty, would wiſh to remove. There is a grandeur in the appearance of certain objects, which compenſates in the eſtimation of every beholder for the defect of regularity. Imagination dwells upon this circumſtance with intenſe enjoyment; and reaſon *ſtands aſide*, as it were, while the mind is entranced with its idea, and daſheth not its pleaſure by the thought of diſproportion.

Theſe remarks bear a ſtrict and obvious application to the preſent ſubject. In the ſphere of philoſophy, conſidered as of the moſt extenſive import, and in every province that is occupied principally by the

underſtanding, the firſt thing to be conſidered is correctneſs of diſpoſition. A writer can only be ſaid to carry his attention to an extreme in this point, when he extends it to minute circumſtances; or by re-touching every part with unremitting aſſiduity, deprives his work of vigour and character. The ſame obſervation may be made on hiſtorical Compoſition, and on that of eloquence (as we ſhall ſhow afterwards), when in the ſimple proof of any propoſition the orator neither ſpeaks to the imagination, nor toucheth the heart. But when we conſider the more peculiar department of exalted genius in Compoſition, the ſublime, and pathetic, it muſt be acknowledged, that not only are the capital beauties of theſe ſuch as imagination ſtrikes out at once in the fervor of abſtracted contemplation, but when we attempt to deſcribe the circle within which ſhe ought to be confined, her moſt ſhining attractions are no longer perceivable, and even that character which the *cloſe* ſuperintendence of judgment renders regular

and

and conſiſtent, becomes at the ſame time languid and unintereſting *.

What

* The character of Cato, in the celebrated tragedy of that name, affords a pregnant example to the preſent purpoſe. That this character is juſt, and rendered conſiſtent by the moſt judicious conduct, will admit of as little diſpute as that the Hamlet of Shakeſpeare is frequently irregular and offenſive. The former (which Voltaire affirms to be the greateſt character that ever was brought upon any ſtage, Lettr. ſur le Traged.) is uniformly great, and "nothing is uttered "by Cato (as a contemporary critic juſtly obſerves) "but what is worthy of the beſt of men." Guard. Numb. 33. Hamlet, on the contrary, ſcruples to kill the king of Denmark at his prayers leſt he ſhould go to heaven, but propoſeth to take him in the commiſſion of ſome deed, which may make his ſoul "as damn'd and black as hell whereto it goes." Cato utters no ſentiment but ſuch as reaſon approves, and is conſiſtent with the dignity of his rank and character. Hamlet, giving a looſe to the wildeſt imagination, aſks his friend, "why we may not trace the duſt of "Alexander till we find it ſtopping a bung hole." Act v. ſcene 1. Yet with all this irregularity in the latter, Hamlet is, upon the whole, not only an amiable, but an exalted character. He holds (if we may thus expreſs it) the *keys of the human heart*, from which he calls out alternately, love, pity, terror, indignation, grief, amazement, horror, and anguiſh; while the Roman, with all his perfections, is cold and unintereſting. We admire his virtues, as we may do thoſe of a deceaſed friend;—but the uniformity of theſe is

What (it may here be aſked) is the tendency of theſe obſervations? Is it the author's

---

ſuch as that any reader may gueſs at the general tenor of his diſcourſe when he knows his ſituation. He cannot, therefore, be much moved by it. Whence does this ſtriking difference takes its riſe? Without aſcribing it to a diſparity of genius betwixt two writers, who both do honour to their country, we may obſerve, that the author of Cato appears to have been too intent upon rendering his principal character *perfect*, to make it deeply intereſting. Such a perſonage is indeed an object of admiration, whoſe original is coldly contemplated at a diſtance; but it can never be ſo of *love*, which is only excited when virtues, weakneſſes, foibles, and blemiſhes, are blended ſo happily into one piece as to preſent a mind ſimilar in ſome reſpects to our own. In order to obtain this laſt end, the wild ſallies of imagination muſt be often admitted into the moſt dignified ſpecies of Compoſition, whereas the *deſign* of the former is *incorrect* when theſe are not wholly excluded. Shakeſpeare, therefore, born with an unbounded reach of imagination, lived in an age when he was at liberty to indulge it. Hence his Falſtaff, Hamlet, Proſpero, Orlando, and many other perſons, are ſuch juſt pictures of human nature, repreſented in *every ſphere* of life, that the fable of Narciſſus may here be ſaid to be realized; and while we are enchanted with this various aſſemblage, the poet's addreſs to him may be applied with ſtrict propriety to us in many caſes,

Iſta repercuſſæ quam cernis imaginis umbra eſt.

and again,

—— tecum

thor's intention to repreſent *deſign* as inconſiſtent with *any degree* of excellence, and the moſt *careleſs* writers as the moſt ſucceſsful?—As it cannot be ſuppoſed, that any author will attempt to ſupport either of theſe aſſertions, we ſhall now

---

——— tecum venitque, manetque
Tecum diſcedet, ſi tu diſcedere poſſis.

But Addiſon, on the other hand, flouriſhed at a time when the principal excellence of Compoſition was judged to be the *chaſtiſed* manner we are here conſidering; and, in truth, no author ever obtained it more thoroughly than he. But fettered in this purſuit by the laws of criticiſm, while his eye was fixed on *propriety*, it loſt ſight of *nature*; and that imagination which diſplays ſuch *enchanting luxuriance* in his *proſe compoſitions*, is rendered unanimated in its *proper province* by caſtigation. Had Shakeſpeare himſelf flouriſhed in the age of Addiſon, how many of his moſt exquiſite beauties muſt have been ſacrificed to the preſervation of *certain unities* which he hath notoriouſly violated; of rules, which a great genius can neither follow without loſing its claim to originality, nor break through without incurring the cenſure of little minds unable to comprehend his motives! Even the excellencies of this admirable writer, in ſuch a ſituation, would have appeared like flowers that languiſh on the parterre when tranſplanted from their native ſoil, fitted only to ſhow, by diſplaying ſome charms in the *garden of art*, with what ſuperior beauty they would have attracted every eye in the *wilderneſs* of nature.

proceed to enquire how far correct Compoſition ought to be ſtudied in ſcientifical reſearch, and in what degree it ſhould characteriſe the higheſt exertion of elevated genius. This is a ſubject which we have not yet entered upon, and which will ſerve, when examined in its full extent, to complete the view we propoſed to take of the characters of Compoſition.

II. As we have already ſeen, that to render any branch of the art here examined correct, is the province of underſtanding, we may naturally conclude, that this ſignature will prevail principally in ſuch ſpheres as the power above-mentioned engroſſeth moſt to itſelf, and in which it is leaſt embarraſſed by the interpoſition of any other. Whatever hath a tendency to hurry the mind in any of its purſuits, by throwing the man off his guard, neceſſarily imparts confuſion to his ideas, and inaccuracy to his manner of expreſſing them. This effect ariſeth moſt commonly from ſome improper influence, exerted either by the imagination, or the paſſions. The firſt of theſe renders thoughts diffuſed when

when they ought to ſtand cloſely together, or ornamented when ſimplicity is requiſite. The latter not only fruſtrate, but pervert reaſon to wrong purpoſes, and ſtamp upon the Compoſition of a writer, the certain marks of their own irregularity. We may, therefore, ſay with Cæſar, in the celebrated oration above referred to *.—

" Omnes homines qui de *rebus dubiis* con-
" ſultant, ab odio, ira, amicitia, atque mi-
" ſericordia vacuos eſſe debent. Haud
" facile animus *verum provident* ubi *illa*
" officiunt."

Of the inequality occaſioned by either of theſe cauſes, the Compoſition of philoſophy and hiſtory, ought to be ſo much corrected as to exhibit the feweſt poſſible examples. An author ought likewiſe, in either of theſe provinces, to give the cloſeſt attention to the juſt connection and diſpoſition of his ſentiments, that theſe may follow each other naturally, and may form altogether a body made up of parts that are mutually proportioned. With regard

* See ſect. iv. of book II.

to

to thoſe enlargements on every topic, which will occur to the mind upon reflection, when its principal work is over, and thoſe little alterations which are made with the view of ſuperſeding ſome frivolous objection, or of rendering the import of ſome thought more perſpicuous, there is no end of ſuch indulgence as this, which after all muſt fail of anſwering any purpoſe. Far from rendering ſentiments unexceptionable, this reſtleſs aſſiduity ſerves only to throw an air of perplexity and embarraſſment over a performance, and the writer can ſcarce expect his reader to be pleaſed, when he appears incapable of being ſo himſelf. An underſtanding, whoſe perceptions of truth or falſhood are originally clear, will place them upon making one comprehenſive examination in the moſt ſuitable points of view. But when the caſe is different, its utmoſt repeated efforts may render the perplexity ſtill greater, but will never remove it.

We do not mean here to affirm, as may at firſt be ſuppoſed, that after having once methodiſed and digeſted his thoughts, an

author

author ſhould not take any ſubſequent view of theſe. He only can be ſaid to have made an examination ſufficiently comprehenſive, who not only endeavours to turn a thought on all ſides in his own mind, ſo as to judge of its truth, and of the exceptions to which it lies open; but who has, at the ſame time, a diſpaſſionate temper which fits him for hearing the judgment of others, and who readily ſubmits to ſuch animadverſions as his own reaſon, uninfluenced by any ſelfiſh motive, approves as well-founded. There is, we may obſerve in general, no ſurer evidence of great intellectual debility, than the deſire which ſome men diſcover, not merely to defend their errors, when candidly pointed out, againſt the exceptions of others, but even, if poſſible, to hide theſe from themſelves. A performance we may ſafely pronounce, whatever excellence it may poſſeſs, muſt fail of being correct, as long as its author is actuated by this principle; ſince, beſides that, an impartial critic can judge much more properly of the elucidation which certain points may require in order

order to produce their effect, than the writer himſelf, to whom theſe are familiar; ſuch conduct, even ſuppoſing the author's underſtanding to be *perfect* (if ſuch a ſuppoſition can be made without a ſoleciſm in this caſe), muſt ſtill be exceptionable, while he addreſſeth himſelf to thoſe whoſe judgment is fallible and uncertain. Upon the whole, therefore, the diſtinct nature of ideas, as having no coincidence; their proper ſelection, as means to promote an ultimate purpoſe; their order, as mutually ſupporting each other; and their truth, as evinced againſt material objections;—theſe are points of eſſential conſequence, to which, therefore, great attention ought to be given, in order to render the ſentiment of Compoſition properly correct. But when the writer hath availed himſelf of the reſources above-mentioned, ſo as to be ſatisfied of theſe capital circumſtances, a minute inveſtigation carried on into every little error which rigid criticiſm may detect, is an endleſs labour at the ſame time that it is of no utility, becauſe not only will one man judge that to be well

explained,

explained, which another may deem faulty; or that to be perfectly intelligible, which another may have charged with obſcurity; but even the ſame perſon will be found to vary at different times in his judgment of ſuch points; and that from cauſes whoſe influence is unavoidable and univerſal.

The ſame finical attention to exactneſs which is thus detrimental to philoſophical ſentiment, will be equally ſo to the language that conveys it. It is when words are moulded into a certain form with much labour, that Compoſition acquires a ſtiffneſs, which we expreſs by ſaying, that ſuch diction *ſmells of the lamp*, i. e. bears the marks of having been wrought up with much toil and difficulty. Art (it is univerſally acknowledged) makes the higheſt effort we expect from her when ſhe diſappears in an imitation, ſo as to leave no traces by which her ſtep may be marked. It is a miſtake to ſuppoſe that this apparent want of deſign (as it may be termed), is obtained by much thought, and coſts the writer many elaborate exertions.

ertions. In fact, it is partly the effect of that eaſy freedom with which the intellectual powers act, when unreſtrained in their exerciſe, by too cloſe an attention to rules; and partly, of being early accuſtomed to the imitation of ſome model in which this character is conſpicuous. The laſt cauſe, in particular, operates much more powerfully than we are apt at firſt view to ſuppoſe. That general ſimilarity which we obſerve in the diction even of the moſt approved contemporary authors, and which marks the productions of an age, as more or leſs conformable to a certain ſtandard, hath its origin in the imitation here referred to. We have already conſidered this ſubject at ſome length *. It is to the preſent purpoſe only to obſerve, that too much attention to make the ſtyle, eſpecially of philoſophical or hiſtorical Compoſition, correct, by attempting to render every word almoſt diſtinguiſhed by ſignificance, and every period by being

* See ſect. iv.

elaborately

elaborately rounded, introduceth as naturally that conſtraint into expreſſion, which is incompatible with correctneſs, as the deſire to pleaſe, when too remarkably predominant, taints the manners with awkwardneſs and reſerve.

The expreſſion of a performance is, upon the whole, ſufficiently correct, when the character, whatever it may be that is required to predominate, is well ſupported, and the fault moſt nearly allied to it is either wholly avoided, or ſo rarely and inconſiderably permitted to appear, as will give no offence to thoſe who are moſt ſuſceptible of being impreſſed by it. Thus ſimplicity, a character required to diſtinguiſh every ſpecies of Compoſition, ought always to be preſerved diſtinct from a certain plain and inſipid uniformity of diction *; juſt perſpicuity from finical exactneſs †; elegance demanding eaſe and harmony, from quaintneſs and affected brilliance, inconſiſtent with both ‡; ſublimity

* Sect. ii. † Sect. iii. ‡ Sect. iv.

from

from bombaſt *; and energy from harſhneſs, diffuſion, and obſcurity †. We have endeavoured to ſhow, in other parts of this work, by what means this important purpoſe may be moſt probably, and completely effectuated, in each of theſe inſtances. The faults here mentioned are ſuch, as when taking place, univerſally diſfigure Compoſition, and deſtroy, in a great meaſure, the effect which it is propoſed principally to bring about in any branch of it. On this account they ought to be avoided by every writer; for which end, we have placed both the excellence, and the error reſembling it, in one point of view before the reader, and have illuſtrated each by ſeparate examples, that having both before him, he may know, as nearly as poſſible, at what point the former obtains in perfection, and when by attempting to purſue it too far he will fall into the laſt.

2. It is a remark which every man of letters hath met with, both in books, and

* Sect. v. † Sect. vi.

in

in converſation, that rules in general are unfavourable to the exertions of a great imagination *; that on this account, the works upon which men in all ages have dwelt with the higheſt admiration, are ſuch as either preceded the exiſtence of critical inquiſition, or cannot yet ſtand the teſt of its rigid inveſtigation; and that in general, the pieces rendered by ſevere attention moſt exactly conformed to a certain ſtandard, are thoſe which exhibit the feweſt examples of conſummate excellence †.

But

* Some of the ancients have for this purpoſe given ſuch definitions of poetry, as muſt exclude the application of rules to the art. Thus Plato terms it, Ενθεια Δυναμις & ΜΙΜΗΣΙΣ. A Latin critic expreſſeth himſelf ſtill more particularly. "Per ambages, Deorumque miniſteria, & fabuloſum ſententiarum tormentum præcipitandus eſt liber ſpiritus ut potius furentis animi vaticinatio adpareat, quam religioſæ orationis ſub teſtibus fides," ſays Petronius Arbiter, ſpeaking of the difference betwixt poetic and hiſtorical narration. This, however, is carrying the matter too far. But the examination of both belongs to another part of this work.

† As a confirmation of this remark it may be obſerved, that the greateſt genuiſes have failed moſt conſpicuouſly when they have attempted to render thoſe

But theſe general obſervations, however true, anſwer no purpoſe of importance, as long as we do not aſcertain the influence which this character ought to exert in the higheſt, as well as in the leſs difficult departments of genius; as it is certain that a performance of any kind, in which no attention is paid to it, muſt preſent ſuch a jumble of incoherent ideas, as no rational mind can contemplate with ſatisfaction.—It may, therefore, be proper here, to

---

pieces correct which attracted admiration in their original form. Bayle has preſerved a curious anecdote to this purpoſe of Taſſo, which accounts for the difference betwixt his Gieruſalemme Liberata, and Conquiſtata, at leaſt in ſome meaſure. In an attempt to correct the laſt (improperly conducted it ſhould appear) he cancelled ſome of the greateſt beauties, and ſubſtituted in their place, others that are unintelligible. "A quali tutti (ſays the Italian critic, after having enlarged on the former) gratiſſimi e giocondiſſimi auvenimente ſuſtituiſſe il Taſſo coſe tali che ſe con ſemplice inteiligenza debbono prenderſi, ſono ſi frivole, che niente piu, e ſe ci e dentro qualche miſtero, egli ci e involto con tante ambagi ch'a ſottrarnelo non baſterebbe l'iſteſſo Edippo." Diction. Crit. &c. Art. RONSARD. The predeceſſors of this illuſtrious writer in the ſame high department of genius, avoid a cenſure of this kind, by having attempted no ſuch emendations.

enter

enter into this ſubject a little more particularly.

The laws of criticiſm conſidered as ſanctions eſtabliſhed by the underſtanding, for the purpoſe of rendering any ſpecies of Compoſition a proper vehicle, either of emolument or entertainment, various as theſe are, may yet be comprehended under the three following heads.—They are either of that kind whoſe obligation is at all times indiſpenſable, and which cannot be violated without defeating the ultimate purpoſe of the art:—or of ſuch a nature, as though always approved by reaſon, when juſtly obſerved, may yet be diſpenſed with upon ſome occaſions that juſtify the neglect:—or, laſtly, theſe conſiſt of certain incidental circumſtances tagged to the former which are eſſential, deriving their origin from accident, and eſtabliſhed principally by uſe.

Under the firſt head we may compreprehend the general method or plan upon which any piece is laid out, whether obvious or concealed; the tendency of its

parts to promote an ultimate end; the union of theſe into one body, ſo as to render it coherent and proportioned; a depth, or ſtrength of conception, adapted to the ſubject; and, finally, a juſt correſpondence of language to the objects, of whatever kind, that are ſet before the mind. Theſe are principles which it requires no great attention to convince us, adhere to the very eſſence of Compoſition, and cannot be diſpenſed with *without* rendering any performance capitally defective. As, therefore, the human mind hath at all times conſidered theſe as fundamental rules, which muſt be obſerved in every inſtance, the deciſions of criticiſm when they are violated, however ſevere, are yet rational, and proportioned to the breach of an indiſpenſible requiſition.

But when ſo much attention is beſtowed on the radical characters here enumerated, as that reaſon approves of them upon the whole, as being well preſerved; there are other points in judging of which this faculty relaxeth of its ſeverity, and though always

always ſatisfied when theſe are cloſely adhered to, yet judgeth their neglect upon ſome occaſions to be compenſated by the attainment of a noble end. We may compriſe in this claſs, the uſe of epiſodes, and digreſſive circumſtances, the connection of which with the principal ſubject, may be ſomewhat remote; the introduction of images not appropriated with perfect accuracy to their originals; thoughts diſtinguiſhed by a certain boldneſs, ſuited rather to the character of the ſpeaker than to the occaſion, and principally thrown out to ſet the former in ſome new point of view; illuſtrations that are beautiful rather as diſtinct pictures, than as ſtrictly conformed to a model; and, finally, flights of imagination wholly excentric, and excuſable only on account of their wildneſs or ſublimity. In theſe caſes, as it is neceſſary to deviate from ſtrict propriety in order to raiſe admiration, we judge that a nobler purpoſe is obtained by the breach of an eſtabliſhed law, than could have reſulted from a rigid adherence to it; and there-

fore ceaſe to apply it where it muſt be deficient.

Laſtly, we may regard as circumſtances wholly incidental, derived from accident, and eſtabliſhed by cuſtom, ſuch rules as regard the diviſion of dramatic pieces into a particular number of acts; the opening of an epic poem in the middle of the action which it celebrates; an attempt to compriſe it likewiſe within a certain determinate number of books, as if the ſpirit of the great maſters of the epopœa would be transfuſed into him who *touched the ſkirt of their garments.* A ſervile adherence to the unities of the drama, belongs likewiſe to this claſs of laws, conſecrated by uſe, rather than approved by the reaſon of mankind; as the loſs of one ſtroke of nature and paſſion, excluded from a performance in conſequence of ſuch an adherence, and far more the abſence of many of theſe left out by this practice, will not be thought by any reader of diſcernment, to be compenſated by the ſtricteſt obſervation of the mechaniſm of the drama,

that

that can be ſuppoſed to take place in any production *.

From this general diviſion of the rules which criticiſm hath eſtabliſhed for the conduct of Compoſition, it will be readily concluded, that the two laſt claſſes are the only ones in which genius may meet with a conſiderable ſhare of indulgence. The principles laid down under the firſt head, are altogether out of the queſtion.—But here I am aware, that a critical inquiſitor may ſtrenuouſly urge a very plauſible objection.—" The laws, he may ſay, by " which every ſpecies of Compoſition " ought to be tried, are ordained like thoſe " of civil government in ſome ſenſe, to

* Some of the laſt-mentioned circumſtances (it may be ſaid) ought not to be included in an enumeration of eſtabliſhed rules in the province of criticiſm, but are rather arbitrary modes derived from imitation. They are here, however, conſidered as rules, becauſe a performance would be excepted againſt in which the leaſt of them (that only excluded, which regards the *number* of books in an epic poem) was omitted; and as *eſtabliſhed* rules, becauſe with whatever truth reaſon may exclaim againſt their obſervance in particular inſtances, cuſtom hath rendered it expedient to carry them moſt commonly into practice.

" maintain order in their departments,
" and to ſubſtitute in place of a wild and
" faulty exuberance, ſuch judicious con-
" duct as a ſenſible mind will ever view
" with approbation. So intimately are
" theſe connected with each other, that
" the leaſt innovation ought to be con-
" ſidered as a precedent leading by natural
" ſteps to the greateſt. Though, there-
" fore, the higheſt branches of Compo-
" ſition may loſe ſome advantages by
" being thus rigidly conformed to eſta-
" bliſhed laws, yet it ought to be remem-
" bered, that when this conformity is
" diſregarded, confuſion muſt immediately
" take place of regularity, and that at
" worſt, if the mind is deprived of plea-
" ſure in ſome inſtances when certain rules
" are adhered to, it meets with fewer
" objects to cenſure than when they are
" violated."

We might reply in general to this ſeries of obſervation, that it would have had much more force at any leſs enlightened period than the preſent, when men were not thoroughly acquainted with the teſts

by

by which criticiſm tries every object; becauſe the frequent violation of her laws might then have been productive of conſequences, which now, when theſe are univerſally known, there is leſs reaſon to apprehend. We will allow, however, ſo much weight to the objection, as that in order to obviate it properly the reaſons ought to be aſſigned for which a licenſe is ſometimes granted of deviating from received principles; the caſes to be ſpecified with preciſion in which this licenſe may take place; and the bounds to be aſſigned with accuracy, beyond which it ought never to be extended. Let us conſider each of theſe in its place.

1. We have already laid down in this ſection, the reaſons which make it neceſſary to grant an indulgence to writers of exalted genius, when we find them aſſuming liberties in the two laſt mentioned departments of the laws of criticiſm, which would be juſtly cenſured in thoſe of an inferior claſs. It is, therefore, needleſs to dwell on this branch of the ſubject at preſent. We may only add to our enumeration

tion of theſe cauſes, a remark that may reconcile even the moſt rigid defender of critical deſpotiſm to the infringement of its rules upon ſome occaſions;—viz. that the diſcerning faculty after all is the ultimate judge to which an appeal is made concerning this infringement, as juſtified or not by the purpoſe to be obtained by it. Every deviation of this kind is conſidered as hazardous. Curioſity is excited to trace out its effect: and even when ſallies of imagination the moſt excentric, bewilder the mind for ſome time in its purſuit, the whole terminates at laſt in this point, whether theſe, when viewed as irregularities in the methodiſed order of Compoſition, are real violations of an eſſential law; or whether they are breaches of ſome ſubordinate nature, whoſe inequality may be amply compenſated by the pleaſure of which they are productive. Of this matter, the diſcerning faculty muſt finally take cognizance. Of the ſuperior powers, by whoſe union it is conſtituted, imagination impreſſeth the idea in all its ſtrength upon the mind, and reaſon enables it to judge

in

in what reſpects it is, or is not, conformed to the laws of criticiſm.

2. With regard to the particular caſes in which the neglect of correct Compoſition may be juſtified, we have likewiſe mentioned, in general, the principal of theſe in the enumeration above referred to. It is a rule with which we expect writers of genius to comply, particularly in the higher ſpheres of its exerciſe, that the epiſodes, or digreſſive parts of a performance, ſhould be wrought in ſuch a manner into the body of the piece, as to complete, inſtead of disfiguring its proportion; and ſhould appear like rays of light, which, though diverging at firſt in various directions from their centre, yet may be made to terminate in one point, and co-operate in the accompliſhment of a general end. On this account, an author ought in moſt caſes to be cautious, both of deviating too often from his principal ſubject *, and of ſtriking too far into the

* " Les Tragedies les plus defectueuſes ſont celles dont les epiſodes n'ont point de liaïſon enſemble; Ariſtote

the paths that lead from it, leſt he break that union of parts in which excellence conſiſts; and bewilder at the ſame time both his reader and himſelf *.—But this rule is not without exception. There are circumſtances apparently remote, and even foreign to the point in view, that yet compenſate at laſt for having thrown it for a time out of the reader's ſight, by that light which they are brought to beſtow upon it in the end, as well as by the peculiar beauties which theſe may poſſeſs when contemplated as diſtinct pieces. A great genius far from being expoſed to cenſure on account of ſuch an introduction of digreſſive circumſtances, will be judged on the contrary, to have diſplayed conſummate maſtery by the manner in which

---

Ariſtote les nomme *epiſodiques* c'eſt a dire ſurabondantes en epiſodes, parce que ces moindres epiſodes ne peuvent en compoſer un ſeul; mais demeurent neceſſairement en cette pluralité vicieuſe." Boſſu du Poëme Epique, liv. ii. chap. 2.

* " Les actions les plus ſimples, & les moins intriguées, etoient le plus ſujettes a cette irregularité, parce qu'ayant moins d'incidens, & moins de parties que les autres, elles fourniſſent auſſi moins de matieres," &c. Id. ibid.

they

they are made to fall at laſt into his ſubject, as harmony will thus appear to ariſe from the diſpoſition of materials ſo complicated as an inferior hand muſt have involved in confuſion *. The law demanding exact proportion to be accurately preſerved in every caſe, is, no doubt, after all violated in ſuch inſtances; but in this violation we obſerve a degree of excellence diſplayed which a tame, though faultleſs compliance with the rule, muſt have effectually ſuperſeded.

When again, we pronounce either a particular thought, or a certain train of ſentiment to be remarkably *bold*, the idea of *temerity* enters in ſome degree into our eſtimation; and whatever bears the marks of this character excludes that of correctneſs. But a diſcerning critic will weigh

* We have conſidered this ſubject at ſo much length in a former eſſay, and have endeavoured to illuſtrate our remarks ſo particularly to the caſe of Pindar, whoſe digreſſions are bolder and more excentric than thoſe of any other author; that we beg leave to refer to that piece the reader whom curioſity may prompt to ſee the obſervations in the text exemplified. Eſſ. on Lyr. Poet. let. ii. p. 95 to 98.

one

one circumſtance againſt another, in order to know how far an author is, on this account, an object of admiration or cenſure; and will conſider, that what may be unappropriated to the occaſion, may yet have peculiar merit, as being adapted to the character of the ſpeaker in ſome branches of Compoſition *; as in others, the ſame thoughts that ſtrongly evince the *genius of the writer*, contain an impeachment on the *prudence*, or even *virtue of the man*. *As critics*, however, theſe objects not only obtain our forgiveneſs, on account of the qualities which we ſuppoſe to have given riſe to them, but even command involuntary admiration.

This is the caſe, likewiſe, with thoſe irregular ſallies of imagination which appear to have been thrown out, as it were, at random, rather as if the writer had been impelled by an enthuſiaſtic impulſe, to break into ſome abrupt apoſtrophe, than

* Let the candid, and diſcerning, apply this remark to the buffooneries (as they are termed) by many of the perſons introduced into Shakeſpeare's plays, particularly in the comic parts.

like him, who, with both the ſuperior faculties acting in juſt combination, ſhould conduct a regulated proceſs to a period. A piece, in which many ſtrokes of this kind were to be met with, it is confeſſed might with juſtice be cenſured as incorrect by *the judicious*; but would it, therefore, ceaſe to be admired as exquiſitely beautiful by the *diſcerning* critic?—By the former, upon being tried by a certain ſtandard, theſe might be condemned as effuſions unconnected with the ſubject, and forming excreſcencies that disfigure its ſymmetry:—by the latter, they would be prized as imitations of nature, the wildneſs or magnificence of whoſe works compenſate, in numberleſs inſtances, for an apparent irregularity of diſpoſition *.—Thus, therefore, in each of the caſes mentioned

* The higheſt productions of genius, and thoſe in which the mind makes the moſt aſtoniſhing efforts, are the works where we will meet with examples of the kind here enumerated. A ſelection of theſe here, would have anſwered little other purpoſe than that of protracting the work. To a penetrating judge ſuch beauties need not be pointed out, and by readers of another caſt, they would not be comprehended.

here,

here, we permit ſtrokes to be thrown into Compoſition that render it incorrect when ſtrictly examined, not merely without cenſuring theſe on this account, but even with pleaſure, when we reflect that a noble purpoſe hath been effectuated in conſequence of an exertion not otherwiſe to be allowed.

3. But is not (it will be ſaid) the method *eſſentially* neceſſary, as we have already ſhown, to be obſerved in every ſpecies of the art, broke in upon when ſuch unlicenſed freedoms are taken at any time, and are juſtified as ſources of happineſs, rather than overlooked as the conſequences of inadvertency? Or admitting that, in ſome few caſes, the delight with which a maſterly ſtroke is contemplated may atone for it as the violation of a rule, ought not *ſome bound* to be fixed, beyond which no acquiſition, however eminent, can make up for a temerity inexcuſable, as it indicates a defect of underſtanding? This laſt requiſition is unqueſtionably reaſonable; and in order to anſwer it as nearly as poſſible, we ſhall here make a few obſervations.

1. The

1. The term *incorrect*, when applied to any branch of the art here treated of, in which we might meet with ſuch ſtrokes as have been enumerated, would characteriſe it, not as a work in whoſe conduct no regard was paid to an arrangement that is indiſpenſably requiſite; but merely as containing certain irregularities, which, without breaking the general unity of deſign, are yet inconſiſtent with perfect accuracy, and might be deemed ſuperfluities. That order in which objects ought at all times to be preſented to the mind, is then only eſſentially violated, when an undue weight appears to be laid upon the leſs, which thus take place of the more important; or when circumſtances wholly foreign to the principal point are introduced, and are purſued without any fixed intention. In theſe caſes, inſtead of a methodiſed ſeries, we meet with a promiſcuous jumble of diſcordant ideas, which the mind can neither contemplate with pleaſure nor information. In whatever inſtances, therefore, we obſerve either of theſe criteria univerſally to predominate,

no reader can be at a loſs to pronounce a ſuitable deciſion.—But it is evident, that the deviations from exact diſpoſition, which we have repreſented here as juſtifiable on ſome occaſions, fall not under either of theſe heads. For it cannot, ſurely, be ſaid, that objects comparatively inſignificant, are obtruded upon the reader in place of ſuch as have importance, when it is only in conſequence of the high eſtimation of theſe, that their introduction is rendered excuſable. Inſtead, on the other hand, of circumſtances promiſcuouſly aſſembled, and purſued without any fixed intention, the licenſe here vindicated is principally that which throws a ſtrong light upon ſome capital object; and though a large compaſs may be taken in order to effectuate this purpoſe, yet at laſt impreſſeth it with an energy which it could not otherwiſe have acquired.

2. As thoſe liberties in Compoſition, whoſe uſe we endeavour to vindicate, are ſuch as make no *real* encroachment upon the order eſtabliſhed in every ſpecies of it, ſo they can likewiſe occur but rarely in

any caſe, and are confined moſt commonly (though not indeed always) to a particular branch of the art. Exuberant imagery, daring appeals, abrupt tranſitions, bold ſentiments, and wild ſallies of imagination, are not often to be met with in the peruſal of any writings, and are highly characteriſtical of the higher ſpecies of poetry. Bold and new thoughts often thrown out without methodical accuracy, will, no doubt, ſometimes point out the track of philoſophical diſcernment, even in that ſphere where correctneſs ought to be the diſtinguiſhing character. But as it is the author's buſineſs here not to *paint*, but to *prove the truth* of certain propoſitions; not to dazzle the mind with novelty, but to convey ſatisfactory information to the underſtanding; whatever tends to perplex the reader's attention, by withdrawing it from the principal point, or to render his view inadequate by the interruption of unexpected tranſition, ought to be carefully avoided, as inaccuracies which diſfigure his work, and which are not to be compenſated by any external advantages what-

ever. Freedom of ſentiment he may indeed indulge, and audacity, when theſe are conformed to the ſtandard of truth, will ſerve to render their impreſſion ſtronger and more permanent. But his deviations (if at all allowable) ought to be ſhort, even though obviouſly growing, as it were, out of the ſubject; his illuſtrations calculated rather to ſhow truth in a *clear*, than in animated colours; and when he riſeth to the ſublime of ſentiment, the admiration of his readers muſt be excited, not by the diſplay of the writer's imagination, but by the extent and compaſs of his judgment, or diſcernment.

Hiſtory, whoſe Compoſition is much more diverſified than that of philoſophy, admits but rarely of the licenſes above enumerated, and would loſe its principal excellence, conſidered as the vehicle of facts related with impartial accuracy, by their introduction. The pen of an hiſtorian muſt, no doubt, be guided by the events of which he treats; and his diction may with propriety be not only forcible, but highly figured, when the ſtronger paſ-

ſions

ſions are naturally awakened by the detail of great or intereſting tranſactions *. It is, however, at all times incumbent upon him to avoid peculiarity, which will always expoſe his candour to ſuſpicion; and ſuch liberties in particular, as in other ſpheres of Compoſition are viewed with an aſtoniſhment which ſuſpends cenſure, would in this be deemed indications of undue partiality, or of an imagination not properly temperated by the controul of underſtanding. From both theſe ſciences the wild and exuberant, as deriving their effect wholly from the fervor of irregular imagination, muſt be wholly excluded at all times without exception.

---

* "Narrat ſane illa, narrat & hæc (ſays a celebrated ancient, ſpeaking of the difference betwixt eloquence and hiſtory), ſed illi omnia ſplendida, recondita, excelſa conveniunt. Hanc, (orationem) ſæpius oſſa, muſculi, nervi, illam (hiſtoriam) tori quidam & quaſi jubæ decent. Hæc vel maxime vi, amaritudine, inſtantia. Illa tractu, & ſuavitate, atque etiam dulcedine placet. Poſtremo alia verba, alius ſonus, alia conſtructio. Nam plurimum refert, ut Thucydides ait, ΚΤΗΜΑ ſit an ΑΓΟΝΙΣΜΑ quorum alterum oratio, alterum hiſtoria eſt." Plin. Epiſt. lib. v. epiſt. 8.

It is, therefore, almoſt only in the two higher ſpheres of eloquence and poetry, that the delight with which certain ſtrokes are contemplated by ſuch readers as are capable of feeling their force, is judged fully to compenſate for that appearance of incorrectneſs which their admiſſion naturally gives to Compoſition. With regard to the rhetorical art, the leaſt reflection will convince us, that with whatever preciſion its general laws may be determined, much greater latitude may be taken in this ſphere preſenting an exhauſtleſs variety of ſubjects, than in the more regulated provinces of philoſophy and hiſtory. In theſe laſt, the proceſs of argument carried on from leſs to more obvious truths, or the detail of tranſactions following each other in a certain natural and eſtabliſhed order, forbid the uſe of bold deviations in almoſt any caſe; becauſe the powers which it is moſt commonly propoſed to impreſs by means of theſe, are weakly if at all excited in the laſt mentioned departments. Hiſtory, indeed, ſometimes addreſſeth herſelf to the paſſions, and even adopts, as we have ſeen,

the

the glowing idioms of imagination. But what in her ſphere is only a ſecondary purpoſe, becomes a principal one in that of the orator; and though it is by different exertions of the intellectual powers that he kindles the imagination, and ſpeaks to the heart (which are therefore conſidered as diſtinct provinces of the art), yet the boldeſt images of the former are introduced ſo naturally into this laſt addreſs, that we not only excuſe theſe, but are even led to contemplate them with admiration *.

It

* Was it neceſſary to eſtabliſh the truth of this obſervation by examples, we might adduce many from the higheſt ſtandards of eloquence, both ancient and modern. One, becauſe it is remarkably ſtriking, the reader will peruſe with particular pleaſure. It is taken from a maſterly diſcourſe of Dr. Fordyce, on the Folly and Infamy of Unlawful Pleaſure. In this deſcription of the death of an abandoned libertine, wrought up with ſtrokes that are worthy of Demoſthenes, he hath contrived to heighten the *pathos* of the ſcene by admitting into it one of the moſt pictureſque images ever ſeized by a ſublime imagination.—"The dread-"ful alternative (ſays he) entirely miſgives him. He "meditates the *devouring abyſs of eternity!*—He *recoils* "as he *eyes* it!"—There is ſomething (if we may thus

It ought likewiſe to be obſerved, that eloquence not only includes (as we ſhall ſhow more particularly afterwards) both the

---

expreſs it) ſolemn, and awfully pathetic in this deſcription, ariſing from the *colour* that imagination caſts on it, which without this heightening could never have taken place. It is no doubt true, in general, that the heart is moſt powerfully impreſſed when a few circumſtances are expreſſed in plain, but forcible words, and are put together in ſuch a manner as to form a climax. The appeals likewiſe, by which it is moſt deeply penetrated, require to be conveyed in few and unornamented expreſſions. The exclamation of Gracchus, which Cicero tells us drew tears from every hearer, is a maſter-piece of this laſt kind. "Quo me miſer conferam? (ſaid he ſoon after the death of his brother) quo vertam?—In Capitoliumne?—At fratris ſanguine redundat.—An domum? Ibi conſpicere matrem miſeram, lamentantemque & abjectam." De Orat. lib. iii. c. 55. When the real or ſuppoſed ſufferer ſpeaks in the firſt perſon, it is only by ſuch plain, though animated expoſtulations as theſe, that a powerful impreſſion can be made upon the heart. It is ſeldom, indeed, that high colouring ought to be admitted into the pathetic part of a diſcourſe, unleſs when narration is employed by ſome third perſon to accompliſh this purpoſe. But genius claims as its privilege, an exemption from theſe rules. It is one of the ſignatures of this great character to ſtrike out light from objects that are commonly deemed leaſt capable of producing it; and even the *inroads* that are made by an exuberant imagination, properly regulated into

the philoſophical and hiſtorical characters, by uniting in its comprehenſive ſphere the didactic with the narrative manner; but even its principal ends, that of painting in particular, and that of moving the paſſions, are obtained moſt effectually by the uſe of licenſes, which a rigid critic might cenſure as rendering the author's plan diſproportioned, and his Compoſition incorrect. Thus we might pronounce with truth, that an orator, by working up the colours with ſtudied attention in which ſome capital object is pourtrayed, and by endeavouring to catch *every* light in which it can be expoſed to advantage, may give one branch of his ſubject greater compaſs and extent than it ought to poſſeſs. The ſame remark may be made of his addreſs to the paſſions, in which the tranſitions may be too rapid, the appeals too daring, and the topics of expoſtulation may hang together with too much *ſeeming* negligence

---

into *foreign provinces*, are marked with ſuch genuine ſtrokes of nature and originality, as that the deviation from a rule is wholly abſorbed in the contemplation of the effect.

to render the diſcourſe ſtrictly conformed to the rules of criticiſm. But the ſtandard of nature, and that of art, are eſſentially different in the caſes here examined. The firſt would lead us to enquire whether the orator in one caſe has really placed the object of his attention in ſtriking points of view; not whether theſe are numerous, but how far each is ſignificant and intereſting. In the other it would ſuggeſt to us, that we are not to try any *eloquent* performance by the teſts above enumerated, as deciſive of its merit, but are to examine a much more important queſtion for this purpoſe, whether theſe correſpond to the natural feelings of a ſuſceptible temper. The avenues that lead to the heart of man are ſo various as not to admit of regular enumeration. We cannot lay down general rules that are ſufficiently comprehenſive of this ſubject; but no man is at a loſs to decide on the tendency of a particular means to excite certain paſſions or affections, becauſe of this he is rendered ſenſible by feeling. Sudden tranſitions have a powerful effect upon many occaſions,

ſions, when the heart is to be penetrated; becauſe nothing is more natural in circumſtances of real diſtreſs, than to fly to ſome proſpect whoſe connection with that which engroſſeth attention, may after all be merely ideal. Appeals in the ſame manner, and abjurations rendered energetical by certain awful and ſolemn circumſtances, are the natural expreſſions of paſſion; and will be judged more or leſs excuſable in particular caſes, in proportion to the ſtrength or imbecility of the mind before which they are preſented. A man of weak feelings, and whoſe exertions are proportionably feeble, will be ſtunned, and, as it were, overpowered by an expreſſion which one of vigorous intellects would have conſidered only as adequate to the occaſion. Nature is likewiſe happily imitated by an apparently negligent diſpoſition of objects, when the paſſions are to be ſtimulated, which hath, in this caſe, much greater efficacy than could have ariſen from the cloſeſt and moſt exact arrangement. The mind, when giving vent to its ſenſations under the preſſure of affliction, is attentive

only

only to the ſtrength of its expreſſion, as conveying theſe with adequate emphaſis. But as its ideas at that time ſucceed each other without much regularity, and are thrown into language as they occur, an imitation of this diſorder, happily executed, is a picture of the human heart, and will be cenſured only by thoſe who are either deprived of ſenſibility, or who have not attended to its effects.

Since, therefore, it will be ſaid, theſe licenſes have a noble effect in ſo many caſes, at what point does this effect terminate, and in what inſtances are ſuch liberties really inconſiſtent with correct Compoſition?—Principally in the three following.

1. When ſo little regard is paid to the eſtabliſhed order of parts, as that one power of the mind breaks in abruptly upon the province of another, without aiding it in the accompliſhment of its particular purpoſe. 2. When an author, not ſatisfied with attracting his reader's aſtoniſhment by ſuperior excellence at one time, attempts to excite this paſſion too indiſcriminately,

criminately, and thus aſſumes liberties upon every occaſion, which a great one can only juſtify. 3. When ſtrokes of perfect originality, whoſe connection with the principal ſubject is at beſt remote, are purſued through circumſtances ſo various and complicated as eraſe it wholly from our memory.

A judicious author will guard with particular ſolicitude againſt the two firſt mentioned indulgences, becauſe by breaking the union of parts in his piece, and by deſtroying its effect, theſe exhibit ſtriking evidences of defective underſtanding. An orator, who in the firſt part of his diſcourſe ſimply proves the truth of ſome propoſition, addreſſeth himſelf wholly to the reaſon of his hearers. Strokes, therefore, however admirable when contemplated apart, which are derived from another power, and are introduced without any tendency to promote his ultimate purpoſe, may be juſtly cenſured; not merely as uſeleſs ſuperfluities, but as foreign circumſtances thrown without order or propriety into a diſcourſe. Theſe, by leading

the

the mind away from the point of which it is in purſuit, inſtead of throwing light upon it, tend to violate an eſſential law, and break that harmony with which the ſubordinate parts of a ſubject ought to concur in promoting a general end *.

Imagina-

---

* Among the ancient and illuſtrious orators of Greece and Rome, there are few examples to be met with of the fault mentioned in the text. But this defect is amply ſupplied by the rhetoricians of the middle and dark ages, as well as by modern writers of this claſe. It is diſagreeable to ſelect examples of ſuch a nature from works of real ingenuity. One however, we ſhall adduce here for the ſake of the *Engliſh* reader, from a late collection of diſcourſes which are diſtinguiſhed, upon the whole, by no inconſiderable ſhare of eloquence. The ingenious Mr. Seed, in a diſcourſe on the duty of unreſerved obedience, propoſeth to obviate this objection to his doctrine;—that it is inconſiſtent with the divine goodneſs to conſign any man, who ſtands clear of all other vices, to future miſery for one habitual ſin. To this he replies, That future miſery is the neceſſary conſequence of one habit of ſin, ſince one habit of ſin diſqualifies us for the enjoyment of heaven.—That habitual bad diſpoſition, ſays he, which the decays of the body do not weaken, the diſſolution of it will not deſtroy.—The joys of heaven (ſays he) are like the beams of light: if they fall upon ſome objects of a ſuitable texture to reflect them, as upon cryſtal, for inſtance, they brighten and beautify them: but if upon others, they are quite loſt

and

Imagination, it is true, may here be permitted to throw ſtrong and lively colours on the objects that are ſucceſſively contemplated. But in this office, it will be obſerved, that ſhe acts only a ſecondary part, by ſetting off rational ſentiments to the higheſt poſſible advantage, and thus impreſſing theſe upon the mind with a force which they muſt otherwiſe have

---

and ſtifled; they preſent nothing to the view but one undiſtinguiſhed blackneſs of darkneſs.—This metaphor, the reader will obſerve, hath no propriety as an illuſtration of the author's reply to the objection here propoſed, but is ſo general and unappropriated, as to admit of an application to almoſt any religious rule. A correct writer will never indulge his imagination in a licenſe of this kind, even though it may have peculiar excellence when contemplated as a diſtinct picture, (which is not the caſe in the preſent inſtance), becauſe it bears no relation to a point upon which every circumſtance ought to throw light; and from which ſuch as are foreign ought to be excluded, for the ſame reaſon, that when employed in any buſineſs that attracts very cloſe attention, we abſtract ourſelves from ſuch converſation as might draw off our thoughts from this point; or ſuch external objects as might divert our eye. We conſider not in this caſe, what attractions either of theſe may poſſeſs, had we been difengaged; but avoid them at the time only as having no relation to our employment.

wanted:

wanted :—whereas in the caſe cenſured, this power intrudes as a principal when it ought to be wholly ſubordinate; and inſtead of promoting the ſearch of truth, preſents objects wholly foreign to ſuch a diſquiſition.

If a writer may thus be cenſured with juſtice, who permits one power of the mind to interfere in the province of another, by throwing into it ſtrokes that are foreign to the ſubject, we may ſurely animadvert with the ſame propriety upon Compoſition, in which, by an attempt to excite admiration indiſcriminately, every part appears to be over-wrought; and the liberties taken at all times are ſeldom juſtified by the occaſion. Even though this attempt had no tendency to render Compoſition inaccurate, good ſenſe would ſuggeſt to the mind, that it muſt defeat the purpoſe which it propoſeth to bring about, even ſuppoſing it to be purſued with ſucceſs; becauſe an object or idea that is truly admirable, in order to make an adequate impreſſion, ought to be placed among ſuch as have a ſubordinate relation to it. By this means,

the

the capital figure is diſpoſed properly, ſo as to produce its full effect, and receives ſome additional grace from each of thoſe that ſurround it. Whereas, when we endeavour to ſhow all objects in the *ſame light*, and to excite promiſcuouſly one uniform paſſion, a work not only ceaſeth to become intereſting by being deprived of juſt variety, but thoughts deſtroy mutually the effect of each other; and the glare that is caſt on all parts prevents us from ſingling out, and from being duly impreſſed by thoſe which we might otherwiſe have dwelt on with admiration.

But it is principally to our preſent purpoſe to obſerve, that the licence is here carried too far; and Compoſition is rendered ſo incorrect by this practice, as to lie open to the juſteſt cenſure. For as the judgment of that writer muſt be defective in a very great degree, which cannot eſtimate the comparative value of objects, ſo as not to know that ſome would be rendered ridiculous by being repreſented in colours that are ſuited to others with propriety; ſo the work of ſuch a mind muſt exhibit marks

of this defect, ſo univerſal as to render the whole diſguſting to a reader of penetration, when conſidered as a body that ought to have conſiſtence and ſtability, in whatever manner he might be affected by the view of particular objects *.

The licence in the laſt place, of digreſſing from the principal point upon ſome occaſions, which is claimed by all writers promiſcuouſly as accompliſhing purpoſes of importance, is then carried beyond its proper bound, when either repeated ſo frequently as to diſtract attention, or purſued through ſo many circumſtances as to throw the ſubject which it was introduced to illuſtrate, wholly out of the reader's eye. A diſcourſe, in which this conduct is purſued, can have no more connection than a dream made up of incoherent ideas, and muſt argue an indulgence of imagination

* The Thebais of Statius affords many examples of the fault here cenſured, as that writer appears to be particularly fond of dreſſing up every object in pompous and affected ornaments. This conduct often prevents the effect of his deſcriptions. The reader may apply, as an example of this kind, the paſſage quoted from him, ſect. v.

wholly

wholly unwarrantable, as it is carried on in oppoſition to every rule that is eſtabliſhed by reaſon *.

The obſervations we have made here, upon the abuſe of the inventive faculty in the art of perſuaſion, bear ſo obvious a relation to that of poetry, as to require no particular application. The only circumſtances by which the laſt mentioned art is peculiarly diſtinguiſhed, are the freer uſe of high colouring in all ſubjects; and thoſe irregular ſallies of imagination which command admiration merely on account of their wildneſs and ſublimity, and whoſe introduction would juſtly be deemed inexcuſable in any other ſpecies of Compoſition. Theſe are of two kinds: the firſt is conſtituted by the exhibition, though perhaps ſomewhat abrupt, of ſome bold

* As no poet, either ancient or modern, riſeth to more aſtoniſhing grandeur than the *Theban Bard*, ſo from none do we meet with ſuch inſtances of an incoherence wholly unwarrantable. The Ode inſcribed Θρασιδαιω Θηβαιω Παιδι Σταδιει, ΠΥΘ. I. A. is wholly of this kind. The imagination of the poet, uncontrouled by any other power, renders this piece wholly excentric, and inexcuſably obſcure.

and maſterly figure; or by an allegorical repreſentation, purſued through various circumſtances, as expreſſive of ſome great idea. The other ariſes from apoſtrophes ſtrongly animated, from daring and original expreſſions thrown into a picture, which give *a grace* to the whole, that renders it truly and *properly admirable*. Of theſe we may obſerve, that not only are they confined to the pathetic art, but it is wholly into thoſe branches of it which afford the wideſt range to the power of invention, that they can be daſhed (if we may thus expreſs it) without giving offence. The great maſter of the epopœa, has eminently diſtinguiſhed his principal work by excellence of the former kind *; and

* The philoſophy of the Iliad, and the knowledge that Homer had acquired of nature, is conveyed in a ſeries of allegories the moſt exquiſitely beautiful that the human mind can be ſuppoſed to conceive. Every object appears to be animated with life, by the *creative touch* of this exalted genius; and hence ariſeth that perpetual ſucceſſion of inchanting forms, which keep attention always awake, while we are reading a work which muſt have otherwiſe excited unavoidable ſatiety from the uniformity of its ſubject. Among ſtrokes thus

and ſome modern performances of the higheſt

---

thus conſtantly diverſified, there are ſome diſtinguiſhed by their originality ſo ſtrongly, as to fix the mind in admiration, and whoſe wild beauty more than contemplates for the defect of ſtrict propriety. Let us take one example. It is in the deſcription of Achilles, upon whoſe appearance Homer has laviſhed all the powers of his genius, when oppoſed in his laſt combat to Hector. After having placed ſucceſſively before the eye his armour, his ſhield, the plumage of his helmet, his terrific aſpect, eagle ſpeed, and godlike demeanor, he paints him at laſt in the act of waving his ſpear, and conſidering in what place his adverſary is vulnerable. On this occaſion, the *very point of this hero's ſpear* muſt be irradiated while yet waving in the air, in order to complete the repreſentation. Obſerve the illuſtration.

Οιος δ' αστηρ εισι μετ' αστρασι νυκτος αμολγω
Εσπερος, ος καλλιστος εν ουρανω εσταται αστηρ·
Ως αιχμης απελαμπ' ευηκεος, ην αρ' Αχιλλευς
Παλλεν δεξιτερη.— ΙΛΙΑΔ. Χ.

In order to have rendered this illuſtration *ſtrictly proper*, Achilles ought to have been placed among many warriors whoſe ſpears were all waving together, but his throwing a ſtronger light around him than any of the others. But who would loſe this exquiſitely beautiful and picturesque circumſtance, for a ſmall impropriety, which after all it is impoſſible to guard againſt in every inſtance, without giving up the nobleſt and moſt ſublime exertions of human genius? In the ſame ſpirit he deſcribes the eyes of Hector in another place, as withering all the ſtrength of Greece. Nothing can

higheſt poetic merit, afford the moſt ſtrik-ing examples of the latter *.

III. We

---

exceed the *wild* beauty of the expreſſion in which this idea is conveyed.

Εκτωρ δ' αμφιπεριſρωφα καλλιτριχας ιππους,
ΓΟΡΓΟΥΣ ΟΜΜΑΤ' ΕΧΩΝ. ΙΛΙΑΔ. Θ.

This is undoubtedly "ſnatching a grace beyond the reach of art," if any thing can be it. Perhaps ſome readers will conſider, as a more ſtriking example of the licence which a great imagination may indulge without cenſure, the following ſublime figure ſet before the mind in the higheſt colouring which that faculty can throw on any object. It is the deſcription of the Origin of Time, in the Night Thoughts, a work inferior to none of the ſentimental kind in point of *poetical* merit. Speaking of the abuſe of time, the poet ſays,

Not on theſe terms was time (heaven's ſtranger) ſent
On this important embaſſy to man.
When the DREAD SIRE on *emanation bent*,
And *big with nature* riſing in his thought
Call'd forth creation!——
Not on theſe terms, from the great days of heav'n.
From *old eternity's myſterious orb*,
Was TIME *cut off*, and caſt beneath the ſkies.

This we muſt, no doubt, acknowledge, has little connection with the ſentiment immediately preceding, in which we are informed, that in no inſtance does this god (as he is called) ſtand neuter. The ſucceeding lines correſpond ſtill leſs to it. But is there a mind animated with the *leaſt ſpark of ſenſibility*, which would daſh out ſo great an effort of the moſt exalted genius, merely on this account?—Surely not. There is

ſome-

III. We have now, in following out the method laid down in the beginning of this ſection,

---

ſomething noble even in the irregularities of a great mind, in which the preſervation of its *radical character* (when an *adequate ſubject* is preſented to it), diſtinguiſheth it from one of an inferior order, and converts its very defects into excellencies!—

* There is, perhaps, no writer, either ancient or modern, who has more the art of rendering his figures intenſely animated and pictureſque by certain daring and maſterly ſtrokes thrown out abruptly, than the divine author of Paradiſe Loſt. His well known deſcription of Death, oppoſed to Satan in his journey through Chaos, is wrought up with ſome which are truly original.

—— Black it ſtood as night,
Fierce as *ten furies*, terrible as hell, &c.

Again,

The monſter moving onward came
With horrid ſtrides;—*hell trembled as he ſtrode.*

Admirable, however, as theſe are, the following ſtrokes thrown into the deſcription of Taſſo's Pluto, is in no reſpect inferior to either.

Roſſegian gli occhi, e di veneno infelto,
Come infauſta cometa il guargo ſplende.

The portentuous glare of the comet flaſheth ſuddenly upon the eye of the reader, and renders its original perfectly pictureſque. It is one of thoſe daring images which a great genius can only adopt, and which we contemplate, not with cenſure, but aſtoniſhment.—We ſhould ſwell this note to too great length by adducing many examples of thoſe expreſſions, diſtin-

ſection, endeavoured to ſhow what is underſtood by the term *correct*, when applied in its moſt extenſive ſenſe to Compoſition; what degree of attention a judicious writer will beſtow on this character in the various departments of ſcience; in what caſes

---

guiſhed by wildneſs or ſublimity, which claim admiration in poetry. Let us, however, juſt mention one of the ſudden apoſtrophe that ſo powerfully excites this paſſion. When Macbeth is juſt ſetting about the murder of Duncan, and has diſmiſſed his ſervant, we expect from him ſome diſcourſe, intermixed with expreſſions of horror and remorſe, which the mind naturally ſuggeſts on the eve of ſome deſperate and wicked attempt. But inſtead of theſe, his entranced imagination preſents to him a dreadful object, and he breaks out at once into the exclamation,

Is this a *dagger* that I ſee before me,
The handle tow'rd my hand?—Come let me clutch thee!

and a little after,

I ſee thee ſtill,
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not ſo before.

This addreſs is more abrupt and daring, than any of which a ſtudied diſcourſe could have admitted, in which the paſſions were to be excited by rules, however cloſely theſe might be adhered to. But *here* it ſtrikes with irreſiſtible energy, and is admirable as a deviation from thoſe very laws, whoſe application in an inferior branch of the art, would have led us to cenſure any ſimilar indulgence as a violation of order.

this

this attention may be carried too far; and, laſtly, we have attempted to aſcertain the bounds within which the licence of diſpenſing with rules that is ſometimes claimed by, and allowed to genius in ſome inſtances, ought always to be confined. It remains only, in order to render our view of this ſubject complete, that we point out the moſt proper methods of acquiring an excellence ſo univerſally attended to; as neceſſary to ſum up our obſervations on the moſt diſtinguiſhing characters of the art.

We ſhall enter moſt effectually into the queſtion which it is here propoſed to examine, by conſidering Compoſition in its moſt extenſive latitude, as conſiſting of the union of ſentiment and expreſſion *. As no

* Quintilian ſtates this point with great propriety. "Proxima ſtylo Cogitatio eſt, quæ & ipſa vires ab hoc accepit, & eſt inter ſcribendi laborem, extemporalemque fortunam, media quædam, & neſcio an uſus frequentiſſimi."—Again he ſays. "Neque vero rerum ordinem modo (quod ipſum ſatis erat) intra ſe, ipſa (cogitatio) diſpoſuit, ſed verba etiam copulat, *totamque ita contexit orationem, ut nihil ei præter manum debet.*"

no performance can be pronounced correct in which there is not a juſt correſpondence betwixt theſe; and as we have already ſhown that they are not neceſſarily connected with each other, in the ſame manner as a cauſe and an effect; we ſhall examine ſeparately by what methods each may appear in the leaſt exceptionable light, and the concurrence of both may effectuate that purpoſe which it is propoſed ultimately to obtain.

1. To render the ſentiment of Compoſition correct, conſidered wholly as a diſtinct branch of the art, the following things appear to be neceſſary. 1. That the thoughts ſhould have a ſtrict relation to ſome principal point, and grow, as it were, naturally out of the ſubject. 2. That theſe, inſtead of being treated in the ſame uniform manner, ſhould be explained with a care proportioned to their nature, and degrees of importance. 3. That they

---

debet." The reader of taſte will be pleaſed with the laſt words of the ſentence particularly, which expreſs the author's meaning with much elegance. Inſtit. lib x. c. 6.

ſhould be ranged in perſpicuous order, ſo as gradually to open upon the mind of the reader, and place the ultimate end clearly and forcibly in his view, as he makes his approach to it.

1. By thoughts that grow out of a ſubject, we underſtand ſuch as naturally tend to produce that effect, whether of proof, illuſtration, perſuaſion, or deſcription, to which they are applied. When this tendency ceaſeth to take place, *correct deſign* is eſſentially violated; nor is the department in which an author is employed of any conſequence, as an apology for an indulgence of this kind. In order to obtain a point of ſuch conſequence, the writer ought not only to keep his eye ſteadily fixed both on the general end, and on the ſubordinate purpoſes which he may accompliſh in the courſe of his procedure; but as it is difficult, eſpecially in works of length, and when the parts are complicated; to avoid the intermixture of *foreign* objects with thoſe that are directly to the purpoſe, he ought to reviſe his performance when his mind is cooled, at intervals

of

of leiſure, from the ardor excited by a conſtant fluctuation of ideas *; and exclude from it thoſe ſentiments, however juſt or ſtriking when viewed apart, which he diſcovers to be protuberances that disfigure his work; or ſuch uſeleſs members of it as may be lopped off without injuring its proportion †. It will, no doubt, require conſiderable reſolution to carry this admonition *ſteadily* into practice, becauſe vanity (the moſt powerful of the paſſions) muſt be mortified by it; and the attractive or entertaining, give place to the uſeful. But this ſacrifice will be made with leſs reluctance when it is conſidered, that by diveſting Compoſition of ſuch adventitious and frivolous circumſtances, the effect of what is retained will be more ſenſibly felt, and every thought, as of importance to the

* "Hæc (Cogitatio) inter medios rerum actus, aliquid invenit vacui, nec otium patitur." Id. ibid.

† Εκ της αναγκης του επιχειρηματος ανιςαμενου τϐ κεφαλαιου κατα το εφ' εξης υψος ΕΝ ο λογος γεννηται, και σωμα, μη διαπτωμενος ευ ταις υποφωραις, αλλα αυτος αυτϐ δοκων εχεσθαι, και ανιςασθαι δι εαυτϐ. ΕΡΜΟΓΕΝ. περι Ευρησ. Σχημ. 12.

end

end in view, will make *that* impreſſion which ought moſt naturally to ariſe from it. Thoughts, on the contrary, or embelliſhments that tend rather to ſhow an author's genius, than to promote his purpoſe, while they gratify a temporary deſire, eſſentially injure his work. By diverting the mind to objects foreign from the point to be contemplated, theſe make it loſe that thread which would have led it by eaſy ſteps, if kept always in poſſeſſion, to the end originally propoſed.

2. As ſentiments, in order to be correct, ought in this manner to have a clear relation to ſome ultimate purpoſe, it is no leſs neceſſary that an author ſhould vary his method of unfolding or enforcing theſe, according to their natures and degrees of importance. No man needs to be informed, indeed, that ſome thoughts either as being more abſtracted in their nature, or demanding illuſtration from the place which theſe occupy, or, finally, in conſequence of the weight that reſts upon them in any branch of Compoſition, require to be explained with greater compaſs and

pre-

preciſion than ſuch as are recommended by none of theſe diſtinctions. But ready as we are to make this general acknowledgment, it happens frequently, that the moſt frivolous parts of a ſubject are thoſe upon which the greateſt attention appears to have been beſtowed; a conduct that naturally renders the whole obſcure, and deſtroys its effect. This propenſity takes its riſe often in men of genius, from the deſire of obtaining a certain end as quickly as poſſible; in the purſuit of which they go forward with ſuch rapidity as prevents them from contemplating at leiſure, the various means that conduce to its attainment. In conſequence of this conduct, the author's inclination takes the lead at many times of his underſtanding; and inſtead of unfolding at length, and with particular accuracy thoſe branches of a ſubject, or thoughts which though perhaps the leaſt ſhowy, are yet of the greateſt importance, he expatiates improperly on parts that are recommended by novelty, or may be laid open with the greateſt facility. Impartial reflection muſt ſuggeſt to us the many

diſadvantages ariſing from this indulgence of an unwarrantable propenſity, by which a man, capable of thinking deeply as well as clearly, gives up his pretenſions to both, in order to follow a whimſical bias; and deprives his performance of its principal merit by attempting to fix the reader's attention moſt intenſely on thoſe objects which contribute leaſt to promote the ſcope he hath in view.

It is by an effort of judgment, not exerted at different times, but carried uniformly into exerciſe, that the conſequences of indulging this bias will be prevented. The mind, it is no doubt true, may be miſled in its eſtimation of objects, ſo as to permit the frivolous to take place of the uſeful in the heat of Compoſition; in the ſame manner as a man of diſcernment in characters, may prefer tinſelled oſtentation to merit modeſtly attired, while he is hurried by buſineſs, or duped by prejudice:—but in both caſes, it is by recollection that the error is detected; and the trivial diſplaced, however elaborately decorated, to make

make way for what has real utility *. By neglecting to purſue a courſe ſuch as is here

* The obſervations made on this ſubject may require perhaps to be exemplified, as many readers, who are not accuſtomed to ſearch out the leſs obvious excellencies of Compoſition, and who want leiſure for this taſk, may be at a loſs to apply general remarks on ſuch a theme, until they are thrown into the proper track. It happens luckily for us at preſent, that in a periodical performance of diſtinguiſhed merit, we meet with an example perfectly to the purpoſe. Addiſon ſays, in one of his Spectators, that "notwithſtanding "we fall ſhort at preſent of the ancients, in poetry, "painting, oratory, hiſtory, architecture, and all the "noble arts and ſciences, which depend more upon "genius than experience; we *exceed them* as much "in doggerel, humour, burleſque, and all the trivial "arts of ridicule."—This fine obſervation (it is well remarked by the author of that excellent paper, entitled, the Adventurer), ſtands in the form of a *general aſſertion*. He examines, therefore, its truth by an induction of particulars, and confirms it by examples. Adven. vol. iv. No. 127, 133. Without entering particularly into the truth of this remark (as to which we might differ from both theſe writers, reſpectable as they are), we may only obſerve from it, that thoughts that are of much uſe when enforced with a certain degree of energy, may yet be overlooked by the greater number of readers, when the *proper emphaſis*, if we may thus expreſs it, is not laid upon them by the writer; and though it is otherwiſe in the caſe here ſpecified, yet neither hath an author reaſon to expect

here pointed out, works in which there is a very high degree of merit are rendered obſcure to the greater number of readers; nor can their opinion be cenſured as raſh or ill-founded. For however intrinſically excellent many ſentiments may be in a work of which theſe ought to conſtitute the principal ornaments, yet it is not ſurely the reader's buſineſs to ſearch them out, if they are placed in diſadvantageous points of light by the writer. The latter may direct the attention of the former to run in any channel that he may cut out for it. If parts, therefore, com-

---

expect that his readers in general will be qualified to feel the force of truths, even the moſt important, when not confirmed by ſatisfactory evidence; nor if they ſhould, that any of them, like the preſent ingenious critic, not ſatisfied with his own perception of ſuch a truth, will endeavour likewiſe to render its influence and evidence univerſal. He, therefore, who fixeth his attention upon the point of utility, ought always to remember, that in order to gain this end, he muſt ſeldom *aſſert* without entering into the proof of his principles; and that it will often be neceſſary for him to act in oppoſition to the impulſe of inclination, when reaſon informs him that by complying with it, he will at leaſt conceal what has genuine excellence; if he does not really ſacrifice it altogether to objects that are comparatively frivolous and uſeleſs.

paratively mean are wrought up ſo highly as to conceal thoſe that are of greater conſequence, he is under obligation to the few who may clear theſe diamonds from the rubbiſh that ſurrounds them, but ought to conſider, as the effect of ſo injudicious a conduct, the cenſure which will in general be paſt upon the whole, as either unintelligible, or containing little to the purpoſe.

That the error here expoſed may be effectually avoided, a judicious writer will find it neceſſary to guard againſt the impulſe of imagination, as this power, even when it ſubſiſts in the higheſt degree, is always ready to beſtow the higheſt colouring on thoughts that ſtrike by their brilliance, rather than on ſentiments that impreſs conviction by their importance. This is a point which it rather demands reſolution, than any great degree of attention to carry into practice. A moderate ſhare of this laſt will enable an author to diſtinguiſh objects of real utility, from ſuch as are adventitious, or ornamental. But it may require no inconſiderable effort to cancel a favourite illuſtration, not be-

cauſe

cauſe inadequate to its pattern, but merely as an unneceſſary embelliſhment; and to ſubſtitute in its place, the proof of ſome propoſition that may have been defectively laid open; the completion of ſome evidence that may not have been ſuitably enforced; or the illuſtration of a thought leſs ſuſceptible of ornament; and to render which energetical, fancy is brought with difficulty to give her concurrence. *Habit*, therefore, is every thing in ſuch caſes as the preſent. When the mind hath been accuſtomed to examine its productions, with the view of placing in ſtrong lights ſuch objects as have primary conſequence, without regarding them merely as agreeable; reaſon will acquire by degrees ſo much command over the other powers, that even when ideas are crouding together moſt cloſely, and when imagination catcheth ſome with eagerneſs, it will check the career of this faculty; and will render its images ſubſervient to the purpoſe of elucidating points of importance, ſo as to prevent future and diſagreeable emendations.

3. We mentioned, as the laſt circumſtance neceſſary to render the ſentiment of

any performance correct, its being placed in ſuch exact diſpoſition as gradually to open with new evidence upon the mind of the reader as he proceeds, that the ultimate purpoſe of the work may be ſhown in a clear and ſtriking light as we approach to it. To go about to prove that thoughts cannot be correctly or judiciouſly put together, when this regularity is not obſerved, would be wholly impertinent. We have enlarged at ſo much length on the ſubject of method in every branch of Compoſition, that without falling into repetition, little can be added on this point. In order to be thoroughly maſter of a ſubject (eſpecially of one that is comprehenſive) an author ought to weigh the principal topics ſeparately in his mind, and to turn each upon every ſide, ſo as to judge of the lights in which it may be expoſed to the beſt advantage. After having marked down ſuch obſervations as occur to him on each part contemplated by itſelf, it will be proper for him to compare them together; that he may judge of their mutual coherence, as well as of their extent, as including what is neceſſary to be advanced.

vanced *. When the writer hath once formed a general eſtimate of this kind, with whoſe accuracy he is ſatisfied, he hath only further to take care in the delineation of particular parts, that his eye when taking cogniſance of one object, may not be diverted to others, as being ſimilar, until his firſt purpoſe is accompliſhed; becauſe the mind is unavoidably embarraſſed by having things of different kinds preſented before it at the ſame time, and can delineate neither with preciſion. On the other hand, when never loſing ſight of his principal end, an author proceeds through the intermediate ſteps with deliberate recollection †, he will moſt probably accompliſh his own deſign effectually, by taking in every means that conduceth to gain it;

---

* This procedure conſtitutes what an ancient critic denominates ΤΟ ΠΡΕΠΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΤΑΞΙΩΣ, the Decency of Order, which he aſcribes ſo particularly to Lyſias. Λητεον δε το ωρεπον της ταξιως ωαρα Λυσια. ΔΙΟΝΥΣ. ΛΥΣ.

† To this purpoſe is the judicious Roman's obſervation.

Ordinis hæc virtus erit & venus eſt, aut ego fallor
Ut jam nunc dicet, jam nunc debentia dici
Pleraque differat, & preſens in tempus omittat. Hor.

and

and will place each of theſe in its proper place ſo diſtinctly before his readers, as at the ſame time to impreſs conviction upon his underſtanding, and the knowledge of the means that produced it upon his memory.

2. Thus far we have endeavoured to ſhow what requiſitions are neceſſary to render ſentiment, conſidered by itſelf, as the moſt important branch of Compoſition, properly correct. In order to obtain this character in perfection, it is, however, indiſpenſibly neceſſary, that a juſt correſpondence of language to thoughts thus accurately diſpoſed ſhould take place *, as without this harmonious concurrence the compoſition muſt be eſſentially defective. This

* Της μεντοι αγωγης των περιοδων το κυκλιον. Και των σχηματισμων της λεξεως το μειρακιωδες ουκ εδοκιμαζον. Δουλευει γαρ η Διανοια πολλακις τω ῥυθμω της λεξεως, και τω κομψω λειπεται το αληθινον. Βυλεται δε η Φυσις τοις νοημασιν επεισθαι την λεξιν, η τη λεξει τα νοηματα. ΔΙΟΝΥΣ. ΑΛΙΚΑΡ. ΙΣΩΚ. It may not be improper to ſubjoin this critic's judgment with regard to the moſt perfect expreſſion, from his excellent treatiſe Περι ΣΥΝΘΕΣ. ΟΝΩΜ. Εστι λεξις ΚΡΑΤΙΣΤΗ ΠΑΣΩΝ η τις αν εχοι πλειστας αναπαυλας και μεταβολας αρμονιας, οταν τυτι μεν εν περιοδω λεγηται, τυτι δε ΕΞΩ περιοδου. Και η δε μεν η περι-

This laſt is (as we have already ſhown) a conſequence invariably ariſing from the former. Obſcurity in the manner of expreſſing ideas, indicates always ſome embarraſſment in their original formation; and he who is able to ſeparate theſe, and range them under proper heads, will never be at a loſs (if he beſtows ſuitable attention on this circumſtance) to convey them to the minds of others with adequate perſpicuity. As we have endeavoured in canvaſſing this branch of our ſubject, to ſhew in what manner every character of the ſtyle of Compoſition may be obtained in the higheſt perfection, we refer the reader to the concluding article of each preceding ſection, for ſatisfaction on this head, along with what is ſaid on it in the preſent.

η περιοδος εκ πλειονων πλεκηται κολων; ηδε δε εξ ελαττονων. Αυτων δε των κολων το μεν βραχυτερον το δε μακροτερον, &c. Vid. Rapin. ΔΙΟΝΥΣ. ΣΥΓΓΡΑΜ, tom. ii. p. 20. edit. Lip.

FINIS.